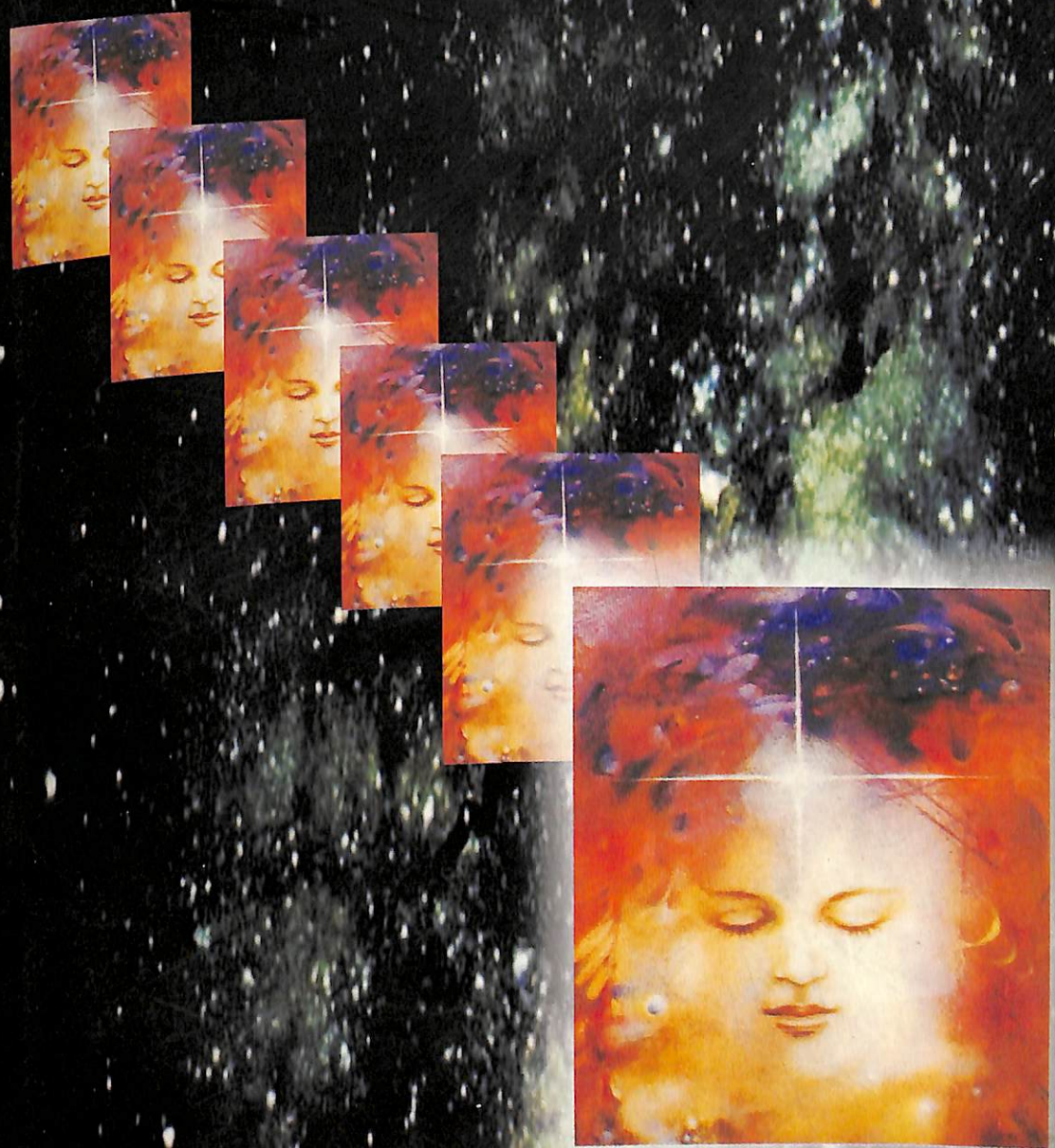
VEDIC SYMBOLISM



Prof. Satya Prakash Singh

VEDIC SYMBOLISM

PROFESSOR SATYA PRAKASH SINGH
Senior Fellow and
In-charge, Vedic Research Centre, New Delhi

Formerly
Professor of Sanskrit and
Dean, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan
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Dedicated to
Rishis who discovered the Supreme Light
and gave the message of immortality.

FOREWORD

That the Vedic language is symbolic has been recognised throughout the long history of development of the Vedic knowledge. The Vedic symbolism continued to be used to a considerable degree in the Upanishads. The spirit of symbolism is constantly alive in the Puranic and Tantric literature. Vaishnavite poetry, too, bristles in symbolism. The important question, however, pertains to values of symbols used in this great Vedic tradition, and these values can be meaningfully uncovered only if the symbols used in the Veda are correctly unveiled. This is a very difficult task, particularly because we are today very much removed from the modes of Vedic thought, while preponderance of the ritualistic interpretation of the Veda has tended to weaken our occult and spiritual sensibility, which is of supreme importance for getting to the heart of the Vedic hymns and their symbolism.

Vamadeva, whom the fourth mandala of the Rigveda is devoted to, declares that Vedic words are secret words and reveal themselves only to seers (निण्या वचांसि निवचना कवये काव्यानि). These secret words are, however, not entirely secret, and the veil that they cast is not always thick; their transparency is often decipherable, and in the hands of the seers they reveal their secret, just as, -- to use the Vedic expression --, the woman reveals herself to her husband. It is because of this reason that the task of unveiling the secrecy of the Vedic symbolism is not as impossible as it might seem. Nonetheless, the task is very difficult and painstaking labour has to be coupled with occult and spiritual sensibility.

It is against this background that Professor S.P. Singh's vast and meticulous labour in undertaking the task of uncovering the Vedic symbols is to be appreciated. He is one of the rarest scholars of India whose knowledge of Sanskrit and of the Vedic Samhitas is so intimate that he is today the most qualified scholar to speak to us of Vedic symbolism and its secrets.

In conducting his research work, he has happily discovered that the light that Sri Aurobindo has shed on the secret of the Veda is an indispensable aid. As is well known, Sri Aurobindo has presented a psychological theory of the Veda in the light of his own spiritual experiences, and the Vedic knowledge that he has brought out has been expounded in two of his major works, "The Secret of the Veda" and "Hymns to the Mystic Fire". He

has also employed this knowledge in his interpretation of the Ishopanishad and Kenopanishad. Indeed, Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus "The Life Divine" as also his other works such as "The Synthesis of Yoga", and "The Essays on the Gita" bear the impress of his discovery of the secret of Vedic symbolism. Professor S.P. Singh has been a life-long student of Sri Aurobindo's works, and his expert knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga is evident in his earlier works on the Upanishads and his comparative studies of Jung and Sri Aurobindo, as also Whitehead and Sri Aurobindo.[1]

It is gratifying that it was at my request that Professor S.P. Singh undertook five years ago to conduct the research work that has resulted in this voluminous book. The first half of the Vedic Symbolism has been devoted mainly to determination of precise symbolic meaning of gross earthly objects used frequently in Veda such as cow, bull, ghrta, horse, chariot, boat, path, cave, etc. while in the second half the same has been done in regard to certain functions, abstract objects, principles and practices such as initiation, spinning and weaving, askesis, sacrifice, Vak, Pranava, Sarasvati and ventures of the most primeval seer Angiras in the realm of the knowledge of the reality.

The meaning behind the symbols has been determined on the basis of sufficient evidence and with utmost care and precision. The basic tool that has been forged out and used in this regard is the use of simile and metaphor in the mantras. Simile and metaphor have been taken as the primary and secondary stages in the formation of the symbol which emerges as culmination of the process.

Having been worked out on this solid basis, nothing arbitrary has been allowed to creep into this study which is intended to be made as precise and objective as possible.

The study of Professor S.P. Singh has led to certain conclusions, main

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1. Upanisadic Symbolism
   Sri Aurobindo and Jung – A comparative Study in Yoga and Depth Psychology
   Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead – On the Nature of God.

features of which can be summarised as follows:

- Gross physical objects have been used in the Veda in some or the other secondary sense and scarcely in the primary sense. Such usage is obviously symbolic. Symbolism is the transference of the signification of a word from the basic to a secondary order of things or ideas.

- The basic idea Vedic seers have intended to convey is of spiritual and deep psychological nature which is the result of their intensive search, contemplation and askesis. The objects, events and processes the seers have adduced for the expression of these ideas have been taken from their surroundings some times in their existing forms and at others in modified forms so as to suit the requirement of expression. Stock example is the bull with four horns, three feet, two heads and seven hands.

- The manifest content or symbol in the Veda has acquired its sanctity in the tradition owing to its association with noble ideas expressed through it as well as to their practical utility in the lives of the discoverers of those ideas.

- Thus the theory of triple meaning of Vedic mantras has come to be redefined in the "Vedic Symbolism" in terms of primacy of the spiritual and secondary character of the physical and the mythical. This accomplishment brings coherence to the meaning of mantras in place of triplicity and the consequent incoherence and uncertainty.

It may be added that this work, incidentally, knocks down practically the entire castle of the theory of Aryan Invasion by showing its total improbability on the textual ground while the close parallelism discovered between Rigveda I.64.7-8 and the Pasupati Seal of Mohen-jo-daro deals a final death-blow to it besides confirming on archaeological evidence the necessity of symbolic interpretation of Vedic mantras. So is the consequence of symbolic interpretation of the Dasarajna War.

I feel very happy to welcome this important book, which can be considered to be a significant contribution of Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan to the cause of recovering the ancient spiritual knowledge of India which is now increasingly recognised to be of direct

relevance to solution of the contemporary crisis from which humanity is passing today.

Vedic Research Centre
Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya
Veda Vidya Pratishthan
Darshan Bhavan
New Delhi

Kireet Joshi

PREFACE

After the publication of my *Upanisadic Symbolism* in 1981, I have been thinking all the time to work out the Vedic Symbolism, as the former was just a stepping stone to it. But the difficulties visualised in the way went on making me postpone the project under one pretext or the other. The background of the work, however, continued to be formed and affirmed so as to enable to reach a definite conclusion regarding the mode of expression of the Vedic seer. It is how I came down to April 1998, when Dr. Kireet Joshi, the real motivating force behind this work, asked me to deliver 30 lectures on Vedic Symbolism before a knowledgeable and interested audience comprising teachers and research scholars drawn from the Universities of Delhi.

The line of approach taken up here is simple and realistic. It is based on the universal psychology of formation of symbols which has already been explained in detail in the *Upanisadic Symbolism*. To restate the same summarily here, the process of symbol formation, no matter explicitly or implicitly, starts with the perception of the point of similarity and comparison between any set of two facts one fully known and the other known only partly but required to be known fully under a certain circumstance. This indeed forms the rock-bottom of understanding whatever. When the fact to be known happens to be precise, the analogue of it assumes the role of a sign such as it happens in the case of alphabets, numerals, indicators put up on waysides etc. On the other hand, when the fact happens to be complex, multidimensional, abstract and of somewhat strange nature, the thing emerging tentatively as its nearest analogue gets established, eventually in course of repeated usage, as its symbol. The process involved in the transformation of the casual analogue into a symbol may be illustrated by the steps underlying transformation of simile into metaphor.

On this simple but fundamental assumption is based in these papers the understanding of the intangible in terms of the tangible in the Veda. Cow, calf, bull, milk, *ghrta*, horse, chariot, wheel, path, light, water, dawn, sun, ocean, night, day, mountain, cave, river, tree, fruit, foliage, bird, etc. are simple spectacles of nature in which the Vedic accounts abound. Naturally, they would have formed the environment of the Vedic seer. In his prayers, it was but natural for him to have made use of these spectacles.

Now the crucial problem behind this usage is whether it is realistic or figurative. The decisive point between these two alternatives is the thoroughness in explaining the mantras concerned in either of these two ways. The point gets elucidated historically by the study of the Veda prosecuted at the initiative of Western Vedic scholars and having been kept continued for about the last two hundred years without being able to draw anything coherent out of the texts so venerably preserved and sought to be drawn upon in actual life since untold ages by a multitude of people in India and thus creating a cultural ethos remaining vibrant throughout the ages and having every prospect of leading the way in the future also. The dry beds of all other concurrent cultural streams world over doubtlessly bear out the remarkable profundity of the source from which this cultural ethos has been flowing out. As such, how can that source be so shallow as to be a mere description of the natural scenario done by the bewildered mind of the primitive and ignorant?

As against this hopeless state of things created by the realistic interpretation, the symbolic one, as followed partly by Yaska and the Upanishads and thoroughly by Sri Aurobindo, evinces the viability of explaining everything in the Veda coherently, systematically and as per its reputation throughout the ages.

The venture of the year 1998 was kept continued in the next year also. Encouraged by the results of the first year as also enriched by the experience of the first series, I took up in the following year certain abstract ideas and practices such as initiation, *tapas, yajna, vak*, and *pranava* and examined them in their symbolic perspectives. Finally, these analyses led to exploration into the ventures of one of the most primeval Vedic seers, namely, Angiras who has been involved in a number of events recounted so picturesquely in the Veda. Analysis of these accounts on symbolic lines has resulted in deep penetration into the extraordinary method the seers applied in their search for knowledge. This analysis, I hope, has opened a systematic way to Vedic epistemology which is so vital for the understanding of the Veda after the demolition of the ill-designed castle of Aryan invasion and primitive origin of the Vedic lore.

It is with this conviction confirmed by decades of thinking and practical application that the present series of lectures is being brought out in print so as to attract the attention of more mature scholarship in the field to the problem concerned as also for further attestation of the solutions offered herewith.

Coming to this end, I must acknowledge my sincere gratefulness to Dr. Kireet Joshi, the moving spirit behind this work, but for whose initiative it might have suffered postponement for all time to come. I also feel beholden to all the participants of the workshop whose articulate comments and suggestions and sometimes even sheer nodding of heads has been of immense value in the correction of my aberrations as well as confirmation of the line of approach taken up in this work. I cannot forget the services of Mr. Mukesh also who by means of his computer gave my shabby manuscripts a neat, clean and crisp form and so promptly as Lord Ganesh might have done in the case of the *Mahabharata*. I am also thankful to Mrs. Uma Chandrasekhar who is working as Research Assistant in our Centre for helping me in the preparation of the Index. Indeed, it is due to both Mr.Mukesh and Mrs.Uma Chandrasekhar that my manuscript has taken the shape of the present publication. I wish them all happiness in life for this signal service.

Graphics used in the book are not of our own creations. They have been drawn from diverse sources to bear out some sort of semblance to the central ideas discussed here. I acknowledge my indebtedness to all those agencies responsible for the creation, production or reproduction, as the case may be, of these graphics.

Vedic Research Centre
New Delhi
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Satya Prakash Singh

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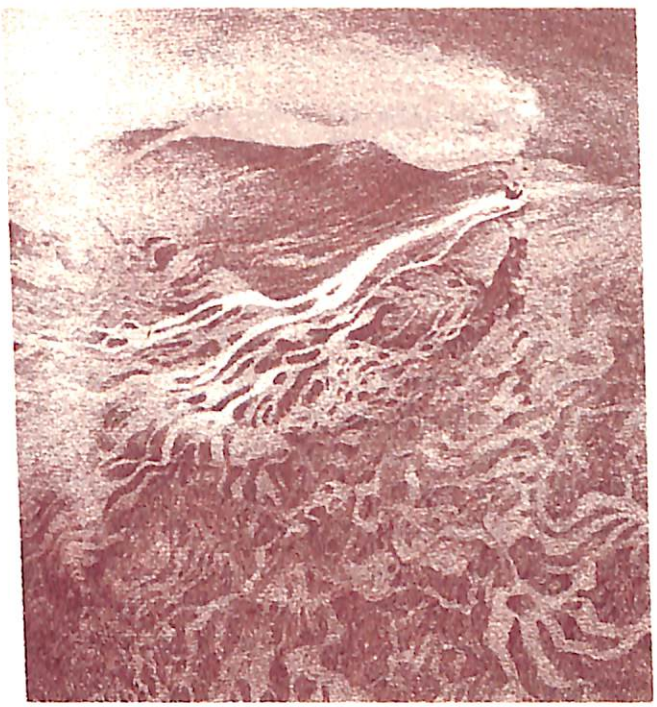

Necessity of Symbolic Approach to the Veda

During the last couple of centuries the Veda has been subjected to most rigorous sort of study possible undertaken by a band of Western scholars including *Colebrook, Bernauf, Rudolf Roth, Max Muller, Waber, Oufrecht, Stevenson, Haug, Hillebrandt, Wilson, Ludwig, Griffith, Oldenberg, Eggling, Macdonell, Keith, Caland, Whitney, Wacker Nagel, Arnold* and *Luois Renou.* They discovered, preserved and deciphered a huge mass of manuscripts, edited them most punctiliously and translated a number of them pretty well. They prepared histories of Vedic literature, grammar of Vedic language as well as treatises on Vedic metres. The Veda was sought to be studied from several viewpoints including cultural, historical, sociological, economic, mythological and iinguistic. Accomplishment of all this task well within just a century and half and that also by scholars hailing from distant lands and from an entirely different cultural milieu is indeed remarkable and obviously goes to the credit of their love as well as devotion to learning. Had they not accomplished all this, it is quite likely that many more of the Vedic texts would not have survived the ravages of time.

Doing so splendidly on this front, however, they could not fare well on the interpretative ground. The only meaning they could discover in this mass of texts with a few exceptions, of course, was that it is the creation of a certain band of people themselves uncivilised and entering into the portals of India somewhere from the Northwest along with their cows, sheep and horses slowly by way of grazing them and happening to have sung out of their joy at the sight of the new land, environs, flora and fauna and subsequently to have engrossed themselves in bizarre rituals abstracted from those early songs of ignorance.

Is this any meaning? And if at all, how could it be that they devoted themselves so painstakingly in deriving it out of so difficult texts as the Vedas? Whatever the reason behind their devotion, however, which could best be understood by those scholars themselves, one obvious result on our side has been that it has created a pervasive fog of distrust in our minds at large towards the sagacity and relevance of the Vedas to our lives any more. Through their toils and tribulations and display of scholarship they no doubt have built up a situation where Veda, the formidable basis of Indian culture, thought and mode of life has turned out to be just an array of ignorant beliefs and practices having no justification for survival any more. May be it is the joy for denunciation of a culture other than their own which kept sustained the majority of

scholars in their painstaking study of the Veda for such a long stretch of time.

Just opposite to this is the case of the Indian scholarship devoted to the Veda since the earliest days, with the only exception of *Kautsa* referred to by *Yāska* and those pursuing Indology in the modern times under the inspiration and on the guidelines of the Western scholars. Preservation of the Veda, indeed, is the most remarkable literary accomplishment of the world so far. In total absence of the art of writing and utmost paucity of writing materials even quite subsequently, keeping such a literary colossus as the Veda intact from that hoary past is unprecedented in the world history. The motive behind this arduous task was obviously not maintaining the records of the forefathers, for the Vedas, basically, are not any such records at all. If anything of the sort is found in them, it has got very much universalised instead of being preserved in its strict particularity, which in itself contravenes the idea of their preservation under the incentive of maintaining the record of the posterity. They have regarded the Veda from the very beginning as the source of supernal wisdom by virtue of having been received by great seers through strenuous *tapas*. This view was in currency as far back as at the time of the *Āraṇyakas* as is obvious from *Taittirīya's* observation: "*The seerhood of the seers lies in the fact that the eternal Veda rushed to them automatically while they were practising tapas.*"[1] This statement of the *Aranyaka* has respectfully been quoted by *Yāska* in his *Nirukta* dating sometime in the 8th century B.C. The *Upaniṣads*, which have been regarded to embody in them the highest sort of knowledge the human mind is capable of producing, themselves hold the Veda in highest regard and in course of their deliberations on the nature of the Reality in its individual, universal as well as transcendent forms quote from them copiously for the authentication of their own statements. To the Upaniṣadic sages, indeed, the Veda is the source of all knowledge whatever and needs, therefore, to be studied thoroughly by everyone unconditionally. They themselves, of course, are to a great extent, abstractions made out of the Vedas. One of the most important of them, *i.e.*, the *Īśa Upaniṣad* is a verbatim derivation out of one of the Vedic *Saṁhitās*, that is, the *Yajurveda*. Obviously it was out of this respect for the Veda owing to its vast knowledge that it came to be held in highest regard from the very beginning in this country so much so, of course, that even in philosophical systems all other forms of knowledge were made subservient to the knowledge available from the Veda.

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1 तद्यदेनांस्तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्मस्वयंभ्वभ्यानर्षत् तदृषीणामृषित्वमिति। *Taittirīya Āranyaka.II.9*

Obviously, perception is extremely important in our scheme of knowing things existing in the external world. So is important inference, for it compensates for the limitations of perception. But our five senses and the inference based on them cannot exhaust the mystery of the universe and life. The individual, with all his limited perceptions and inferences, can by no means be expected to know the reality in its entirety. Despite these limitations of his instrument of knowledge, however, he is ever keen to know the reality in its wholeness, as incomplete knowledge can never be fully satisfying to him. For the fulfilment of this inclination of the human mind, all systems of Indian philosophy, except *Buddhism*, *Jainism* and the *Cārvāk*, take recourse to the Veda incontrovertibly and without fail. The recognition accorded to the Veda as the source of knowledge of supra-sensory and trans-inferential quality to such an extent by such great thinkers as *Gautama, Kaṇāda, Kapila, Patañjali, Jaimini* and along with their followers like *Vātsyāyana, Īśvarakṛṣṇa, Kumārila, Prabhākara, Śankara, Rāmānuja, Bhāskara*, etc., extending until now with all their yogic experience, logical acuteness and philosophical sagacity, is not anything so insignificant as to set aside simply on the suggestion of some alien scholars having come to study the Veda with spectacles coloured by an entirely different cultural milieu.

Centuries before the founders of these philosophical systems even, *Yāska* took full cognisance of the supramental character of the Vedic knowledge. While discussing *Audumbarāyaṇa*'s views of the extremely fleeting character of language and its inability to bear the burden of classification of vocables, *Yāska* observes that behind all this fleetingness of the human language and understanding embodied in the mantras, which co-ordinates the momentary vocables, fleeting percepts, discordant concepts and disparate bits of action into durable wholes so as to bring consistency and meaningfulness to the human speech, thought and action, Veda, in his view, represents that eternal and infinite source of supernal knowledge which from behind the operational area of the human mind acts as the element of co-ordination of disparate vocables and ideas borne out by them.[2] It is due to the presence of this co-ordinating factor that there arises the sense of continuity and meaningfulness in our thoughts and actions as well as in speech. Once this factor of co-ordination

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2. इन्द्रियनित्यं वचनमौदुम्बरायणः। तत्र चतुष्ट्वं नोपपद्यते। अयुगपदुत्पन्नानां वा शब्दानामितरेततोपदेशः शास्त्रकृतो योगश्च। अनीयस्त्वाच्च शब्देन संज्ञाकरणं व्यवहारार्थं लोके। तेषां मनुष्यवत् देवताभिधानम्। पुरुषविद्यानित्यत्वात् कर्मसंपत्तिर्मन्त्रो वेदे। *Nirukta I.20*

gets denied, the whole rosary of sequence in thought and action as well as speech falls apart scattered in the form of disparate beads having no more to do anything with one another, and leaving nothing to interconnect and act as the sequence amidst the separate moments.

Yāska considers the Vedic seers as to have realised and understood the basic principles governing the cosmic as well as individual life. He calls these principles as *Dharma*. Of course, the Vedic seers are called *Ṛṣi* on account of their direct vision of these principles.[3] Obviously these principles are supramental and are hardly to be grasped by commonplace thinking. On account of having embodied in them direct vision of these principles, the Veda has been regarded by *Yāska* as the source of real *vidyā* or knowledge. Imaging out this knowledge concretely as the goddess of learning, *Yāska* recounts how she approached the knower of its secret and asked him to give full protection to her since she was the eternal treasure in his possession. The danger she indicated to him lay not in his dispossession of her anyway but in her falling into wrong hands through wilful transmission. She, therefore, warned him not to deliver her to one who was jealous of her, lacked in straightforwardness and had no control over himself, including his thinking and behaviour. With this much kept in mind in regard to its transmission, the Vedic wisdom, she assured, would naturally get profounder and profounder.[4] If, on the contrary, it fell into the hands of those who somehow or the other were jealous of it and lacked in self-control and straightforwardness in their outlook, it was sure to be made foul and dispossessed of all her grace, glory, secret and sanctity.

This is exactly what has happened in the case of Vedic studies particularly in the modern times. In sharp contrast to its total closure during the middle ages, it happened to be made open for all without any consideration whether one was prepared enough to be taught it to him or not. If the extra care, which was taken in its conservation during the ancient times led to reducing it to the status of remaining a closed book for millennia, the sudden opening of it by Western scholars and beginning to read it solely by themselves with their entirely different background made them denude it of all its sacred and secret meaning.

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3 साक्षात्कृतधर्माण ऋषयो बभूवुः। *Nirukta I.20.*

4. विद्या ह ब्राह्मणमाजगाम गोपाय मा शेवधिष्टेऽहमस्मि।
असूयकायानृजवेऽयताय न मा ब्रूया वीर्यवती तथा स्याम। *Ibid. II.4*

If the Indians rejoiced in its sheer chanting and thus put to abeyance the technique of interpreting it, the Western scholars in total absence of any such technique compounded by the arrogance of their certain pre-suppositions ran over the whole of it so hurriedly in such a way as to declare it as good for nothing in regard to its sanctity and sacredness.

To explain the situation concretely, if the famous classical idiom *gangāyām ghoṣah* were to be delivered to a group of persons conversant with Sanskrit but having no inkling into the nuances of meaning implicit in it, they cannot but wonder at the first instance on the implication of the existence of the cowherd's village upon or inside the stream of river Ganga. Being faced with the obvious contradiction and getting no clue to its reconciliation from anywhere, they may very well decide in favour of declaring the idiom as a product of a certain crazy mind having lost all sense of co-ordination between the reality and its verbal expression. Alternatively, if not so hasty in their judgement as to doubt the sanity of mind of the author, they may very well develop doubt against the established meaning of *ghoṣa* and deriving it out of *ghuṣ*, to make noise, they may take it to stand for a certain aquatic animal capable of living inside water as well as keeping to swim over it. Having once formed such a opinion by common consensus, of this group happens to be confronted subsequently by someone conversant with the real implicit meaning of the idiom, they may very well seek to prevail over him by the sheer force of logic in their favour consisting in the positivity and directness of their interpretation as against the indirectness and implicitness of the traditional connotation. They may very well argue in favour of primacy of the noise-making animal as the meaning of *ghoṣa* relegating cowherd's village and, of course, purity, coolness, etc., to secondary and tertiary positions.

This is what has happened with the Western scholars' study of the Veda. They acquired working knowledge of Sanskrit and jumped straightaway on Vedic texts with the help of the commentaries of *Uvvaṭa, Mahīidhara* and *Sāyaṇa* in manuscript form as also with the help of local pundits but in vagrant defiance of them generated out of their confidence in their newly manufactured tool of comparative philology and mythology. The opinions formed in this way made the Veda totally shorn of the wisdom traditionally ascribed to it by taking it as a matter-of-fact account of the situations arising out of the confrontation of the newly-coming Aryans with the aborigine non-Aryan people of India. The interpreters were so confident of the veracity of their interpretations that wherever their hypothetical interpretation did not fit well with the text, they outright

denounced the author of the latter as obscure, unnecessarily mystifying or not understanding what he meant to communicate. When the interpreter, instead of conceding to his inability of not understanding the text concerned properly begins to dictate terms to the author, and that also not present, the result is quite understandable. It would obviously be reading one's own ideas in the text rather than trying to grasp the meaning intended to be communicated by the author himself. As soon as they took *tapas* in the sense of heating the body by sitting close to fire or in the scorching heat of the sun, they changed the whole grammar of the Vedic culture and its literary presentation. When the Vedic seers like *Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Vasiṣṭha*, etc., get turned into priests performing sacrifices for their respective patrons so as to facilitate their task of acquiring cows, horses, gems, heroes, sons, etc., and heating their body and manufacturing mantras so as to suit the occasion and get the sacrificial fee to the maximum, the entire tenor of the Vedic culture gets automatically turned in the desired direction requiring only working it out in details. What a colossal travesty of facts! Similarly, by giving a slight twist to the meaning of *Soma* as an intoxicating drink of a certain creeper by partaking which at the sacrificial ground the priest would get out of his senses, the interpreters made themselves armed with the convenient stick to beat the Vedic ethos badly wherever it happened to raise its head above the commonsense. And such instances are not inconsiderable in the Veda. Accounts there are associated mostly either with sacrifice and *tapas* or with the pressing, offering and drinking of *Soma*. A slight twist in the meaning of these, therefore, is sufficient to create havoc with the real sense of the Veda. It is hundred and one times more difficult to trace out the finer sense implicit in a text of such antiquity than to make it further clouded by bringing to pre-eminence its manifest content. It requires a great aesthetician or connoisseur of art to discover coolness and purity behind *gaṅgāyām ghoṣaḥ* while just a learner of Sanskrit to take it in the sense of the village of the cowherd in the stream or close to the stream of the river *Ganga*.

Just as proper appreciation of a piece of art requires a connoisseur of art or a literary creation requires a reader of refined taste and trained sensibility, even so, or rather much more than that, decipherment of the ideas lying implicit in the mantras requires on the part of their reader the great skill, training and understanding so as to transport himself to the age and plane of consciousness of the seer. If even the tallest peak of the Himalayas loses its height considerably to a distant onlooker, it is but

natural for a reader distant historically, culturally as well as psychologically from the Vedic seer to misunderstand his ideas expressed through the mantras. To understand him in his right perspective, therefore, requires cultivation of utmost sympathy, purification of consciousness, absolute objectivity and development of sagacity approximating that of the seer himself. All this demands a high level of concentration and self-restraint on the part of the prospective reader of the Veda. This is what has been laid down by *Yāska* as an essential prerequisite for the study of the Veda. According to him, the Veda can be understandable best to a seer standing at the same wavelength spiritually as the seer of the mantra himself. If any lesser person wishes to understand the Veda with some depth of ideation and experience, he is required to undergo a certain stringent course of *tapas*. Anyone lesser than a seer or at least he who has not put in such *tapas* does not deserve to be initiated in the Vedic wisdom.[5]

The difficulty in understanding of the Veda, according to *Yaska*, is twofold. In the first place, the Vedas are not the creation of the ordinary commonplace plane of consciousness. Had it been so, neither the seer of the mantra nor its reader would have been required to undergo any course of *tapas*, which obviously is the means of attaining to higher planes of consciousness. Secondly, whatever has been experienced or understood by the seer ascending a higher plane of consciousness through *tapas*, has been presented not in an ordinary way directly, plainly and literally but in an extraordinary way and suggestively, not, of course, deliberately but as a prerequisite of proper co-ordination between the experience and its verbal representation. As the bed of the river is formed as per the quantum of water flowing through it, even so the verbal representation of the experience is determined by the quality of the experience itself. According to *Yāska*, this is why the seer while intending to communicate his extraordinary experience has chosen the medium of expression replete with allegorical content.[6] It is in this admixture of the allegorical content that lies the secret of Vedic symbolism. In fact, the symbolism arises out of the allegorical content itself. This style of the Vedic composition is reflected suggestively in the frequently occurring Brahmanic statement that gods prefer implicitness to explicitness.[7]

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5 न हि एषु प्रत्यक्षमस्ति अनृषेः अतपसः। *Ibid., XIII.12.*

6 ऋषेः दृष्टार्यस्य प्रीतिः भवति आख्यानसंयुक्ता। *Ibid. X.46.*

7 परोक्षप्रिया हि वै देवाः प्रत्यक्षद्विषः।

This, however, does not mean to suggest that the Vedic seers enshrouded their newly acquired knowledge and wisdom in a thick garb of symbolic expressions so as to make it inaccessible to the common man as distinct from people of their own class or clan. Any such apprehension has nothing to support it in the Veda itself, which on the contrary talks of making the entire human society universally enlightened, as is evident from declarations like *kṛṇvanto viśvamāryam*. As will be discussed subsequently, *Ārya* in the Veda does not mean any particular race, class or clan of people, but those who cherished universally recognised higher values of life such as truthfulness, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, politeness and culture. The visions of the Vedic seers are meant primarily for inculcation of these values by any means be it *tapas*, sacrifice, contemplation, meditation or just diligent action in life. Apart from self-satisfaction, this being the basic purpose behind the seer's quest and the consequent vision of the mantras, there is no scope at all for imputing any ulterior motive to him for taking deliberately to the symbolic way of expression in lieu of the direct one. On the contrary, symbolic way of expression was the inevitable necessity of communicating the kind of knowledge and wisdom coming to him as a result of his entrance into the higher consciousness relating to the basic nature of things. As this knowledge was supra-rational at least at that stage of human development, and yet was essential for the elevation of mankind, it had to be captured and expressed in the necessary symbolic form at that stage so as to be rationally inculcated in mankind gradually in days to come. When the sacred *Gāyatrī* mantra invites mankind *en masse* to meditate on the supernal light of *Savitṛ*, the fundamental force of creation and propulsion, so that its higher power of understanding may get stimulated, it serves as the mouthpiece of the whole of the Veda in its basic intention and purpose. If stimulation of the higher power of understanding is the pre-condition of receiving the knowledge of the essential nature of things, it is quite in the fitness of things that reception of the Vedic knowledge has the pre-requisite of mankind's orientation and preparation on that line. The Vedic student approaching the teacher with fuel in his hand was symbolic of his determination to get duly purged and prepared through outer and inner sacrifice for developing his receptivity of the higher knowledge the teacher was going to impart to him. The binding of undergoing the discipline of *karma* before being worthy of getting admitted to *jñāna* is just an extended form of the same psychological process. The *karma* does not necessarily mean kindling the fire and putting oblation in it. It is rather symbolic of any action physical or intellectual meant primarily for self-purification so as to develop the receptivity of higher knowledge.

As humanity as a whole, despite several pitfalls in the way since, has traversed far ahead of the Vedic age in intellectual culture and spiritual refinement, it is now the proper time for lifting the curtain of symbols hiding the knowledge and wisdom behind it so that the same may be made available to one and all universally for practical use in the upliftment of mankind, irrespective of his caste, creed, race and nationality. The spectacular development of the means of communication in recent years is a clear indication of the preparedness of the humanity for the reception of this knowledge kept concealed more or less until now by the cluster of symbols. At this moment one would like only to pray in the words of *Viśvāmitra* to *Agni*, the reservoir and flame of wisdom to direct his illumination hitherward like a mighty stream of water descending from the mountains and quenching the thirst of all and bestow upon us universal wisdom, which be both profound and beneficial.[8] This stream of wisdom is obviously Vedic struggling through the mountainous heap of symbols to come to the view and use of the common man like the *Gaṅgā* descending from the Himalayas and making her water available to one and all without any discrimination whatever.

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8 या तें अग्ने पर्वतस्येव धारासश्चन्ती पीपयद् देव चित्रा।
तामस्मभ्यं प्रमतिं जातवेदो वसो रास्व सुमतिं विश्वजन्याम्।। *RV.III.57.6.*

Yaska's Cognisance of Symbolic Usages in the Veda

1

Yāska undoubtedly is the leading light on the Veda. As is evident from *Sāyaṇa*'s commentary, it is *Yāska* who has formed the backbone of his Vedic interpretation to a great extent. On whatsoever mantras *Yāska's* commentary is available, *Sāyaṇa* quotes it invariably in the midst of his own commentary on those mantras without showing any disagreement with him. Even then, however, if *Sāyaṇa* develops a viewpoint about Veda, which is markedly different from *Yāska's*, that is particularly due to *Yāska* having commented on the mantras only selectively. Had he commented as extensively as *Sāyaṇa*, the latter would not have dared to transgress him on the rest of the mantras also.

The validity of *Yāska's* views on the Veda lies obviously in his relative closeness to the Vedic age, though by his time also it had become considerably antiquated and difficult in understanding, so much so, of course, as to make *Kautsa*, one of his contemporaries, pronounce outright the meaninglessness of this classic.

Moreover, *Yāska's* understanding of the Veda is characterised by conformity to tradition on the one hand and incisiveness of logic on the other. While not disregarding the tradition, he seeks to explain everything in a logical way by going into the depth of the text concerned. These two qualities of his approach have made the *Nirukta* turn out to be an indispensable aid to any Vedic interpretation whatever. If the Western scholars failed to under the real thrust of Vedic thought, that was partly due to their disregard of *Yāska* on crucial points as well as their faulty pre-suppositions about the Vedic history and ethos.

While venturing on this project of Vedic symbolism, it is, therefore, essential to stop for a while and try to see what this oldest and greatest custodian of the Veda has to offer on the subject.

To begin with, it is important to note that *Yāska* regards the Veda not as a creation or composition of a usual state of mind as is the case with other literary works. In his view, the composers of Vedic mantras were really seers. Their seeing lay in their direct access to the basic principle underlying the phenomena of life and the world called *dharma.*[1] It is

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1 साक्षात्कृतधर्माण ऋषयो बभूवुः। *Nirukta I.20.*

the principle of unity controlling the entire dynamics of diversification operating on all planes of being including the physical, metaphysical and spiritual. This is evident in *Yāska's* famous passage explaining the interrelationship of gods and goddesses among themselves. According to it, the one and the same *Ātman* is subjected to prayer by seers in various ways on account of its intimate participation in each and every manifestation of the world. Various gods and goddesses, *Yāska* continues, are just like limbs of the *Ātman*. As the seers could catch hold of that principle of unity underlying the diversity, the latter lost its rigid exclusiveness for them. They visualised gods and goddesses, therefore, as being born of one another and inhering in each other's nature, some being born of the action of the other while the other one out of the spirit of the latter. Even their chariots, horses and weapons, asserts *Yāska*, are nothing but carvings out of the basic stuff of their formation called *Ātman*.[2]

Such an extraordinary perception or vision has ordinarily been conceived world over as owing to the operation of certain extra-terrestrial agencies. *Yāska*, however, differs categorically from such an explanation. In his view, there are several layers of consciousness ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary. While the ordinary one is responsible for our perception of the commonplace things, the extraordinary layer of consciousness is the recipient of matters extraordinary such as gods and goddesses along with their formations and operations. *Yāska* considers the entry of the Vedic seer into such a layer of consciousness as not a matter of chance or accident but as the result of the seer's own efforts put in the form of *tapas*, involving self-control and deployment of attention to a certain objective transcending all conveniences of life. As a result of this austere, rigorous and concentrated practice, the seers entered into a different dimension of experience, quite distinct from the commonplace one. This experience has been characterised by *Yāska* as *śrutimatibuddhi*, wisdom laden with supra-normal hearing and contemplation. Since this wisdom has been revealed to seers having passed through a stringent course of *tapas*, it, points out *Yāska*, cannot be waded through by those who have not undergone any such discipline.[3]

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2 माहाभाग्याद् देवताया एक आत्मा बहुधा स्तूयते। एकस्य आत्मनोऽन्ये देवाः प्रत्यंगानि भवन्ति। अपि च सत्त्वानां प्रकृतिभूमभिःऋषयः स्तुवन्ति। प्रकृतिसार्वनाम्याच्च इतरेतर जन्मानःभवन्ति इतरेतर प्रकृतयः कर्मजन्मानः आत्मजन्मानः। आत्मैव एषां रथं भवति आत्मा अश्वः आत्मा आयुधम् आत्मा इषवः। आत्मा सर्वं देवस्य ।*Ibid., VII.4.*

3 इयं सा विद्या श्रुतिमतिबुद्धिः। *Ibid., XIII.13.*

As this experience or wisdom is of extraordinary sort quite other than what we normally are familiar with, its expression involves a certain amount of difficulty for the seer as well as for the reader. As regards the seer, he is called upon to give expression to his uncommon experiences in commonplace idioms, phrases and images so as to be understandable by the common man. Naturally such an expression would involve a certain quantum of jump from experience to ideation and from ideation to verbal expression. In such a state of things, the seer would necessarily have to take recourse to means other than plain description in a matter of fact way. This difficulty, in *Yāska's* estimation, has led the Vedic seer to take recourse to three extraneous elements of expression. These are history, prayer and fiction.[4]

The element of history must have come to the consciousness of the seer from his and his predecessors' memories of the past occurrences, incidents and personalities. Being presumably based in actuality, this element in the mantras may naturally be considered of least symbolic significance. Even then, however, being wholly extraneous to the experience and as such, being used not primarily but only secondarily to give expression to the experiences of the seer, it, too may admit of symbolism. So far as the element of prayer is concerned, it, to be sure, is freer to be symbolic in character by virtue of being governed least by factuality as well as logical consistency. When the same prayerful autonomous consciousness comes to combine a few images so as to read like a tale, it becomes a *gāthā* by virtue of the element of sequence introduced to it. While *Ṛk* confines itself normally to the use of one single image in giving expression to a seer's particular experience, *gāthā*stretches itself to take in its purview a number of such images combined together in a common thread of sequence resulting in the formation of a certain narrative. As *gāthā* also has prayer as its basic building block, it too can equally well be highly symbolic in nature.

The commonplace worldly images the seer uses to bring out his magnanimous experience of the great *Atman* underlying the entire phenomenal diversity so as to make it communicable to lesser people, has been called by him as *bhūta-nāma-dheya*, actual representatives. He recounts under this head such words or figures as *haṁsa, dharma,*

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4 तत्र ब्रह्म इतिहासमिश्रम् ऋङ्मिश्रं गाथामिश्रं भवति। *Ibid., IV.6.*

yajña, megha, soma, āpaḥ, vyoma, arṇava,samudra, anna, haviṣ, adhvan, vṛkṣa, etc. It would be interesting, therefore, to try to see afresh how these commonplace things are actually symbolic in the Vedas as has been presumed by *Yāska* and elucidated too, though only scantily.

Concretization is a fundamental principle noted by *Yāska* working behind symbolic expression. As per *Yāska's* assumption, each Vedic seer had had intimate experience of the great *Ātman* lying behind the diversity. But for this experience, he could not have brought so much flexibility to his conception of gods and goddesses so as to admit of their birth mutually from one another. It also is a fact that the experience of the *Ātman* is the subtlest of all experiences whatever, as the *Ātman* is characterised as transcendent of everything actual and possible. To bring this supernal and extremely subtle experience down to the intelligibility of the common man engrossed in the actuality of the world, needs rendering of it in these concrete terms in a way so that it may be understandable concretely without losing its essence in course of the rendering.

Another element *Yāska* discerns in the expression of the seer resulting in its symbolic nature is copious use of tales having nothing to do with actuality and yet serving as an appropriate vehicle of communication. While commenting on a Ṛgvedic mantra describing a particular bird entering into the sea and seeing the whole of the world together besides being licked by his mother and himself licking the mother, *Yāska* observes how the seer rejoices in giving expression to his experience through the use of fictitious tales.[5] Under this category can be brought and treated symbolically hundreds of tales occurring in the *Samhitās* at places, such as that of the four-horned bull entering into the mortals as envisioned by *Vāmadeva* or the two birds sitting on the self-same tree as seen by *Dīrghatamas.*

Simile is the third element of expression marked by *Yāska* with due emphasis. As will be seen subsequently, simile is the overt part of symbolic expression. Indeed, it is by relegating the signs of the simile that symbols get formed. *Yāska* notes carefully certain instances of relegation, though without elaborating on the far-reaching implication of it. For instance, while commenting on the relevant part of a Ṛgvedic mantra

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5 एकः सुपूर्णः स समुद्रमा विवेश स इदं विश्वं भुवनं वि चष्टे।
तं पाकेन मनसापश्यमन्तितस्तं माता रेळिह स उ रेल्हि मातरम्। । *RV.X.114.4.*
इति ऋषेः दृष्टार्थस्य प्रीतिः भवति आख्यानसंयुक्ता । *Nirukta X.46.*

addressed to *Indra* and having to do something with the branches of a certain tree for its subject matter, *Yāska* observes that there was implicit presence of the word *iva*, like, in the form of *nu* suggesting a comparison between the branches of the tree on the one hand and the sense of security *Indra* provides on the other.[6] Just as the tree reaches far and wide providing shade to a lot of creatures placed at even considerable distance from the trunk, even so *Indra* creates the sense of security even where he actually is not present. This simile can very well form the basis of a symbolic expression using the branches as a symbol of the sense of security generated by contemplation on *Indra*. The usage is so subtle that had *Yāska* not marked it, it would pretty well have remained unnoticed and consequently misunderstood possibly even until today.

The fourth element in *Yāska* related to the use of symbols is the derivation of key words in the understanding of the precise meaning of mantras. As such words were decisive in determining the meaning, they had to be explored in all possible shades of their meanings. It was out of this necessity that these words were culled out of the texts, collated with their near synonyms, explored in their various shades of meanings and came to form what is known as *Nighanṭu*. *Nirukta* of *Yāska* is a commentary on the same *Nighanṭu*. By way of commenting on *Nighanṭu*, *Yāska* has developed the science of derivation which determines the meaning of unknown words or words of dubious connotation with reference to their origins or the original component of them. Following this principle of derivation, *Yāska* has assigned usually more than one meaning to such words. This has subjected him to the charge of dubiousness in his approach, as very often, he has transgressed precise phonetic laws in the derivation of words as well as in determining their connotations. While charging him like this, it has been forgotten that the basic task undertaken by him was not derivation of words but determination of their precise meanings. In the accomplishment of this task, he has used derivation as simply a tool. Besides derivation, he has made copious use of his free imagination to sense the context of the word concerned. In this way he has explored into all possible connotations of certain words so as to get the best out of those possibilities. In such cases, derivation has been used by him just as a cover to put things in a presentable form. The liberty of imagination he has taken in this regard

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6 वृक्षस्यु नु तेऽ पुरुहूत वयाः । *RV. VI.24.3.*
वृक्षस्येव ते पुरुहूत शाखाः । *Nir.I.4.*

speaks of his keen understanding of the symbolic usage, which always involves a certain degree of uncertainty. Herein, of course, lies the basic difference between sign and symbol. While sign is governed by certitude, symbol remains always open to novelty of interpretation. If the algebraic sign is bound to stand for only one quantity in a certain context, any literary symbol is amenable to several interpretations simultaneously and much more so in course of history. This is simply on account of the fact that while sign is a well calculated substitute of a certain quantity, quality or object, symbol is a distant model of something otherwise unapproachable.

Cognisance of this fact in *Yāska* is evident not only in his derivation of single words but also in his outlook towards complete mantras or indeed towards the Veda as a whole. His theory of threefold interpretation of the Veda is a significant illustration on the point. According to this theory, Vedic mantras have the possibility of interpretation on three levels, the physical, the supra-physical and the spiritual. *Agni*, for instance, which has so elaborately been invoked in the Veda, appears sometimes as the physical element, sometimes or rather more often as a deity and sometimes also as the psychic or spiritual being lying in the heart of man. So is the case with the rest of the divinities. Almost all of them can be identified on these three levels with the sole exception of certain divinities of purely psychological nature, such as *Dhī, Dhiṣaṇā, Manyu*, etc., which are shorn of physicality. They too, however, retain their remaining two aspects, that is supra-physical and spiritual. The triplicity in the nature of the Vedic deities brought out by *Yāska*, indeed, has emboldened the Western scholars to try to reduce each Vedic deity to the physical level identifying it with some or the other physical phenomenon cancelling, however, the remaining two aspects as a sheer concoction of the primitive mind, as the Vedic seers were supposed by them to have actually been.

This misuse apart, however, which shall be taken care of subsequently, the triplicity of interpretation raises the moot question as to the primacy of anyone of the three in the view of the seer, as it is difficult for anyone whosoever to communicate three messages through a single statement and yet all of them be of equal status. This has been done in Sanskrit literature to a certain extent as has been marked in the form of such figures of speech as *anyokti, sāṅga rūpaka, śleṣa, samāsokti*, etc., and later on in a big way in the form of epics like *Rāghava-Pāṇḍavīyam*, etc., telling simultaneously stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahābhārata* through the same *Ślokas* involving slight shifting in certain syllables this way or that way. All this, however, is simply playing with words

facilitated partly by certain Sanskrit words bearing several meanings each and partly by coalition of words so usual in the language. This, however, is not the case at all with the Vedic texts. Here words are used usually in their established derivative sense and without any possibility of shifting their first and last syllables this way or that way. Thus the cause of diversity of connotation here is neither syllabic transference nor even certain words signifying distinctly several things each. Here the variety of meaning emerges from dimensional difference in our outlook towards the object denoted by the particular word or mantra as a whole. The dimensional difference obviously is partial and by no means total. Here the reality remains all the same with stress on a particular perspective at the cost of others relegated to the background for the onlooker concerned. If we see a big structure from a point close to it, we will see just one or at the most two dimensions of it and by no means all the three together. But if the same structure were to be viewed from a considerable height above it, we may see all its three dimensions at once or even the fourth one also if we have a sufficiently trained scientific mind. This is the case with the Vedic seer. He views things from such a height and with such a searching spiritual power that things in all their dimensions, outer and inner, reveal to him together in one and the same vision without any dichotomy. Since things are viewed by him integrally, he has no necessity of drawing any line of demarcation in things themselves, which becomes necessary for onlookers from the commonsense viewpoint. The one and the same *Agni*, for instance, can be seen by the common man usually only in his hearth, or at the most on the part of the earth coming in his visual perspective, by the geologist inside the earth besides, by the astrophysicist in the planets and stars as well but by the Vedic seer inside the human self also besides at all these places and that also just in a single vision, as is evident from *Viśvāmitra's* invocation of it as lying in the heaven, on and inside the earth, in vegetation, in waters and operating in the creation of the universe as well as seeing things from within the human consciousness itself.[7]

Now, if we follow strictly the principle of triplicity of interpretation in regasrd to the Veda, the problem is where to end with the physical, where to jump to the supra-physical and where to enter into the spiritual, since all the three are revealed here simultaneously on one and the same canvas?

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7 अग्ने॒ यत् ते॑ दि॒वि वर्चः॑ पृथि॒व्यां यदोष॑धीष्व॒प्स्वा य॑जत्र।
येना॒न्तरि॑क्षमु॒र्वाऽत॒तन्थ॑ त्वे॒षः स भा॒नुर॑र्ण॒वो नृ॒चक्षाः॑ । । *RV.III.22.2.*

This is perhaps why *Yāska*, though mentioning the theory of triplicity of meaning and sometimes applying it in the interpretation of certain mantras, does not stretch it to any considerable extent and coming down to the seventh chapter of his work dilutes this triplicity into another one based on the grammatical category whether a particular mantra involves address to the deity concerned in the third person, second person or first person and has named them as *parokṣakṛtāḥ, pratyakṣakṛtāḥ* and *ādhyātmikyaḥ* respectively.[8]

This dilution done by *Yāska* himself indicates to the liquidity of the principle of triplicity of meaning in the Veda and thus leaves all the more complicated the problem of discernment of the symbol and the object of symbol here. Some idea of his accomplishment on this significant point, however, can be formed better by making a review of his interpretations on certain relevant mantras, which will follow in the sequel.

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8 ताः त्रिविधाः ऋचः प्रत्यक्षकृताः परोक्षकृताः आध्यात्मिक्यश्च। *Nir. VII. 1.*

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One of the spheres in which *Yāska* has displayed his awareness of the Vedic symbolism prominently concerns the relationship of our central being with our sense organs. There is a mantra in the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* which speaks of seven seers appointed at different strategic spots in the body and guarding it with full care in the waking state but withdrawing to the world of sleep being relieved of their tiring duty by a couple of gods keeping awake and sitting constantly for the whole year.[1] Obviously this mantra also talks of seers working as watchmen, retiring to sleep after their duty is over and being substituted by a set of two gods who remain sitting awake throughout the whole year unlike the seven seers whose duty is confined only to the daily sacrifice. Now the points of incongruence in this mantra lie in so dignified persons as seers serving as watchmen of the body considered as the sacrificial ground and their substitution by still more dignified personalities like the gods. If taken literally, therefore, this mantra may look like a childish fantasy bereft of all sense of propriety. In the light of *Yāska's* observation on this mantra, however, the façade of incongruence vanishes forthwith leaving the reader wonder on the profundity of the wisdom embodied in it.

According to him the seven seers referred to in this mantra are not really seers but the six sense organs and the learning lying within us. In this enumeration, *manas* is given the status of the sixth sense over and above the five organs which include eye, ear, nose, taste and touch. Their basic function is very rightly cognised as the protection of the body. The seventh in this order is the learning of the man concerned. This is also highly psychological inasmuch as it bears out the deep perceptive capacity of *Yāska* to put the five sense organs under one category, *manas* in the other and learning in the third one. They all, however, as has been noted by him, have their operation restricted only to the waking state. As soon as the person goes to sleep, they suspend their respective functions forthwith. But, since they manage to resume their functions with the waking of the person next, they are supposed to have entered into the *Ātman* for the time being.

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1 सप्त ऋषयः प्रतिहिता शरीरे सप्त रक्षन्ति सदमप्रमादम्।
सप्तापः स्वपतो लोकमीयुस्तत्र जागृतो अस्वप्नजौ सत्रसदौ च देवौ। *VS. XXXIV.55*

Significantly enough, the state of sleep does by no means remain completely bereft of guards. It, according to *Yāska*, is attended by two another set of guards which he calls *prājña* and *taijasa*. *Prājña* is the source of wisdom, *prajñā*, while *taijasa* is the power of illumination operating constantly as the medium of manifestation of that wisdom. It is really the intermediary operating between the *Ātman* and what are characterised as guards of the waking state. It is by virtue of their functioning that one has in the state of dream knowledge sometimes of objects and events placed at considerable distance in space and in future even. It shows their defiance of the constraints of time and space. This is why they are considered as immortal in contrast to the group of seven guards characterised as seers who obviously are mortal. Seers come and go but the gods remain constantly the same. They operate in the waking state also but their operation in this state gets mediated by that of the senses, the mind and the learning. This point is brought out still more prominently through the figure of two types of sacrifices, daily and yearly. While the seven seers are conceived as taking their seats beside the sacrificial fire only for the day and retiring at the advent of the night, *prajñā* and *taijasa* are taken to continue to sit day and night throughout the whole year symbolising the whole of life. From this perspective, life is considered as a sacrifice in which the object is being constantly offered as oblation to the fire of the subject by the senses, the *manas* and the learning on daily basis while by the *prajñā* and *taijasa* permanently.[2]

What a beautiful and penetrating analysis of life comprehending its physical, reflexive, instinctive, intellectual and spiritual aspects in the integral vision of the seer! This vision might have remained ignored one does not know until what time had *Yakşa* not de-symbolised the mantra by taking the seers and gods in their respective symbolic connotations.

Immediately after this mantra *Yāska* quotes another mantra from the *Atharvaveda* to show how symbolisation of the sense organs by seers was not exclusive to any one of the Vedic seer but indeed was an established practice with them. This mantra talks of a bowl whose bottom is upward

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2 सप्त ऋषयः षट् इन्द्रियाणि विद्या सप्तमी। आत्मनि। सप्त आपनानि इमानि एव स्वपतः लोकम्अस्तम् इतम् आत्मानं यन्ति। तत्र जागृतः अस्वप्नजौ सत्रसदौ च देवौ। प्राज्ञः च आत्मा तैजसः च। इति आत्मगतिमाचष्टे। *Nir.XII.37.*

3 अर्वाग्विलश्चमस ऊर्ध्वबुध्नो यस्मिन् यशो निहितं विश्वरूपम्। तस्यासत ऋषयः सप्त तीरे वागष्टमी ब्रह्मणा संविदाना। *Brh.Up.II.2.3 See also AV.X.8.9*

and a hole into it forward. In this bowl is contained the entire glory of the world. On its banks are sitting the seven seers while speech as the eighth one is in alliance with *Brahman*, the supreme reality itself.[3] In this mantra, everything, except *vāk* and *Brahman,* refers to something or the other gross and tangible. It is, therefore, most likely to be misunderstood as a funny account of an actual bowl put upside down and having a hole in it facing its perceiver. The seven seers sitting on its banks may, therefore, be considered as nothing but the childish fantasy of taking this bowl as a holy tank with some devout persons, possibly seven in number, waiting for their holy bath or sitting in meditation after having taken the same. The idea of the bowl containing it the entire glory of the world may be considered as having its basis in its being put upside down and thus generating the sense of mystery in the childish mind. *Vāk* and *Brahman* may easily be waived aside as unnecessary appendages usual to the Vedic people.

This facade of seeming actuality dashes down to the ground, however, the moment we take into consideration *Yāska's* rendering of the seven seers into the seven *indriyas*. Significantly enough, unlike the case of the previously quoted mantra, here he renders *saptarşayah* by seven *indriyas* alone excluding *manans* and *vidyā*. This he does by taking eyes, ears and noses in twos as they each form two holes in the head. Mouth as the seat of taste makes the total number of the holes in the head seven. As all of them are seats of operation of the sense organs, they are taken as *indriyas*. In this enumeration, *vāk* is added as the eighth seer. It is said to be in alliance with *Brahman*. The alliance of *vāk* with *Brahman* is a highly significant idea. It recurs elsewhere in the *Ṛgveda* in the form of collateral existence of *vāk* and *Brahman*.[4] The recurrence bears out its axiomatic position in the Vedic thought reflecting intimate relationship between the word and the reality in the vision of the seer. It is in view of this singular relationship as well as the amazing perceptual, conceptual and inferential power of the sense organs and the mind, all located in the human head, that the latter has been stated in the mantra as the repository of the entire glory of the world. This glory obviously lies in the human head supposed to have embedded in it in microcosmic form whatever lies there in the totality of the reality including the universal and the transcendent

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4 यावद् ब्रह्म विष्ठितं तावती वाक्। *RV.X.114.8.*

both. By pointing out cryptically in his characteristic way that this mantra, in spite of embodying material drawn pre-eminently from the objective world and thus showing the plausibility of its explanation in terms of the sun and its rays, is overall intimately suggestive of the spiritual state of things, the matters of externality being thus symbolic of it, *Yāska* opens the door to the depth of meaning put in this mantra so beautifully as pointed out above.[5] The substitution of *manas, taijasa* and *atman* of the previous mantra suggests to the equivalence of language with knowledge as well as the reality behind it in the understanding of *Yāska*. It is this cognisance of equivalence of the word with the knowledge and the reality both which forms the basis of the regard for the Veda, obviously available in mere verbal form, as the repository of all knowledge representing the totality of the reality. It also suggests very well to its origin from the human head as the latter is supposed to have compressed in it all knowledge whatever. Herein lies the justification for referring to the openings of the head as the seven seers. The idea of the alliance of *vāk* with *Brahman* also reminds us of the spectacular experiences of *Vāgāmbhṛṇī* recounted in *Ṛgveda X.125* where she feels herself as moving in the company of all the gods including the *Rudras, Vasus* and *Ādityas*, doing everything for them as well as for seers and as having given birth even to the heaven and not to speak of lesser things including the earth.

The same sort of symbolic representation of the sense organs by the seer *Yāska* understands in regard to another *Ṛgvedic* mantra situated at *X.82.2*. The mantra speaks of *Viśvakarman* as all-comprehending, all-pervading, creator of all in unity as well as diversity and as the highest seer of all in its totality. It also tells us that all desires of seers get substantially fulfilled at the point where the seven seers combine in the transcendent one.[6] Apparently the mantra seems to talk about someone known as *Viśvakarman*, supposed to be the creator and dispenser of certain things, supremely vigilant and standing above the seven seers. He may, thus, be the most distinguished one amongst the seers, occupying a position higher than the famous group of seven seers.

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5 अत्र आसते ऋषयः सप्त सह। आदित्यरश्मयः। ये अस्य गोपाः महतःबभूवुः।
इति अधिदैवतम्। अथ अध्यात्मम्। अत्र आसते ऋषयः सप्त सह। इन्द्रियाणि।
यानि अस्य गोप्तृणि महतः बभूवुः। उति आत्मगतिम् आचष्टे। *Nir.XII.38.*

6 विश्वकर्मा विमना आद्विहाया धाता विधाता परमोत संदृक्।
तेषामिष्टानि समिषा मदन्ति यत्रा सप्तऋषीन् पर एकमाहुः।। *RV.X.82.2*

Yāska, however, takes the mantra as entirely symbolic suggesting things altogether different from the apparent one. By way of explaining it on symbolic lines, he ascribes two sorts of meaning to it characterising them as *adhidaivata* and *adhyātma*. By way of expounding the first one, he takes the seven seers as symbolic of the seven rays of the sun getting ultimately merged in the latter. He, thus, identifies *Viśvakarman* in the form of the sun itself. The sun, no doubt, is the main source of the energies operative in our solar system. It is through the sun's agency that this part of the universe has come into being. It is the sun which appears to be the most prominent observer of the universe from our standpoint. It obviously throws rays out of it which are seven in number. Since ultimately it is the rays of the sun which are instrumental in our seeing, they may figuratively be conceived as seers in themselves. By virtue of being the source of all the seven sorts of rays, it may also be considered as the ultimate point of fulfilment of those rays. It obviously stands in transcendence of all those rays by virtue of being their common source and resort. In this way, this explanation appears to be convincing enough, at least much better than the apparent one seemingly referring to someone as the best of the seers occupying a position higher than that of the well known seven Vedic seers. A rough idea of the literal meaning of the mantra can be had from *R.T.H. Griffith's* translation of it which runs as follows:

"*Mighty in mind and power is Viśvakarman,*
Maker, Disposer and most lofty Presence.
Their offerings joy in rich juice
Where they value one, only One, beyond the seven Rishis. "

Obviously *Yāska's* explanation of the mantra in terms of the sun and its rays is much more understandable than this literal one which is just a jumble of mutually incompatible and discordant ideas as the offerings taking joy beyond the seven seers.

The sense of the mantra gets revealed most consistently, however, when we come to the alternative explanation offered by *Yāska* under the head *adhyātma*. According to it, *Viśvakarman* is omniscient, omnipresent, dispenser of things in all their diversity and the real seeing power behind sense organs, mind and understanding as is symbolised by the seeing power of the seven seers combined. The seven seers, as was explained by *Yāska* himself in the last but one mantra discussed above, are the five sense organs, the *manas* and the learning or power of understanding. Since all these seven, as is evident from the *Upaniṣads*, particularly the

Kena Upaniṣad,[7] derive their real power from the *Ātman*, *Viśvakarman* of this mantra cannot but be the *Ātman* described figuratively as lying in transcendence of the seven seers. When these seven sources of knowledge, described figuratively as seers, get absolved of all distractions and become concentrated and dissolved in the *Ātman*, the individual concerned comes to experience the highest possible beatitude symbolised by the object of desire in the mantra and represented concretely as food by *Yāska*.[8]

Thus we see how by making out the precise symbolic value of seers as well as of *Viśvakarman*, *Yāska* is able to assign a meaning to the mantra in complete concordance with the thought of the *Upaniṣads* which have traditionally been regarded as representing the real essence of the Vedic *Saṁhitās*. In the absence of this symbolism, on the other hand, the mantra does not remain anything more than a statement full of discordance and inconsistencies. Equation of *Viśvakarman* with the *Ātman* has understood behind it the grand equation of the *Ātman* with *Brahman* implying thereby the equation of *Viśvakarman* with *Brahman* itself.

There is another mantra addressed to *Soma* which has been taken up by *Yāska* for symbolic interpretation particularly in regard to the relationship between the sense organs and the *Ātman*. The literal meaning of the mantra can best be presented through *Griffith's* translation which is as follows:

"To Soma come the Cows, the Milch-kine longing,
to Soma sages with their hymns inquiring.
Soma, effused, is purified and blended:
our hymns and Tṛṣṭup songs unite in Soma."[9]

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7 केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः।
केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति।।
श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः।
चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति।। *Kena Up. I.1-2.*

8 विश्वकर्मा विभूतमनाः यत्र एतानि सप्त ऋषीणानि ज्योतीषि। तेभ्यः परः आदित्यः। तानि एतस्मिन् एकं भवन्ति। इति अधिदैवतम्। अथ अध्यात्मम्।
विश्वकर्मा च संदर्शयिता इन्द्रियाणाम्। एषाम् इष्टानि वा। अन्नेन सह संमोदन्ते। यत्र सप्त ऋषीणानि इन्द्रियाणि। एभ्यःपरः आत्मा। तानि अस्मिन् एकं भवन्ति। इति ात्मगतिम् आचष्टे। *Nir.X.26*

9 सोमं॑ गावो॑ धेनवो॑ वावशा॒नाः सोमं॒ विप्रा॑ म॒तिभिः॑ पृच्छमा॑नाः।
सोम॑ः सु॒तः पू॑यते अ॒ज्यमा॑नः॒ सोमे॑ अ॒र्कास्त्रि॒ष्टु॒भः॒ सं न॑वन्ते।। *RV.IX.97.35.*

Obviously the mantra talks about *milching* cows and inquisitive seers coming to *Soma* which is being purified while mantras in the *Trstup* metre are being offered to it. But, what is the meaning of *milching* cows coming to *Soma*? Is it possible for cows to be present out of their own accord at the site of the pressing of *Soma*? The answer in the positive does not carry much weight. Similarly, what is there in the pressing of *Soma* for seers who have always been regarded as highly intelligent and wise.

These discrepancies in the literal meaning ought to have necessitated anyone of the Vedic students to have looked around and tried to have found out some solution for them or at least impelled him to note them down. Incidentally, however, not to talk of lesser students of Veda who for millennia have been keeping themselves busy exclusively with the recitation of mantras sparing no time and energy to devote to the meaning of those mantras, even *Sāyaṇa* himself, the Vedic commentator *par excellence*, comments on this mantra in almost the same literal sense as has been made out subsequently by the translation of Griffith as quoted above. He too has not cared to stop even for a while and think of the inconsistencies involved in this interpretation.

Yāska, however, seems to have taken due note of these problems and has, therefore, offered two interpretations to the mantra apart from the literal one which he has taken for granted. According to one of the alternative meanings, *Soma* is symbolic of the sun while cows stand for its rays. Just as cows return home in the evening lowing and filled with milk for their calves, even so the rays of the sun return to the solar orb in the same evening having drawn water and juices of plants, herbs and trees with them. This much is quite plausible. But, what about seers rushing to *Soma* with inquiries from the depth of their mind? In this case, however, *Yāska* finds no way out except to explain it in terms of return of rays to the sun.[10] In this way, this mode of *Yāska's* interpretation falters here miserably. In cognisance of this limitation of his first explanation, therefore, he suggests an alternative one characterising it as *Adhyatma* as distinct from the first one termed as *Adhidaivata*.

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10 एते एव सोमं गावः धेनवः रश्मयः वावश्यमानाः कामयमानाःआदित्यं यन्ति।
एवमेव सोमं विप्राः रश्मयः मतिभिः पृच्छमानाः कामयमानाः आदित्यं यन्ति।
ते एतस्मिन् आदित्ये एकं भवन्ति। इति अधिदैवतम्। अथाध्यात्मम्। *Nir.XIV.15.*

In this alternative explanation, he takes the milching cows as symbolic of sense organs while *Soma* as that of the *Ātman*. As regards the inspired seers approaching *Soma* inquisitively, he interprets this also almost in same terms excepting the addition of *matibhiḥ pṛcchamānāni* which is there in the mantra. By way of justifying this symbolic interpretation, he observes that it is to this *Ātman* that the sense organs and what we call the seven seers get eventually withdrawn.[11]

As we have seen in case of earlier mantras interpreted symbolically by him, here also he brings in the same point of merger of the sense organs in the *Ātman* suggested symbolically by rushing of cows to *Soma* lowing and being filled with milk and alternatively by seers approaching the same *Soma* with great inquisitiveness. Neither the number of the cows nor that of the seers has been mentioned here. *Yāska*, however, specifies the number of the seers as seven leaving the number of the cows unspecified. Moreover, the seers have been referred to here by the word *viprāḥ* instead of *ṛṣayaḥ* as was the case with earlier mantras discussed in this row. Even then, however, he in his explanation of this mantra also returns to the idea of the seven seers merging in the *Ātman*. His rendering of the cows and the *viprāḥ* together by seven seers, thus, shows that here what he intends to suggest by *indriyāṇi* as substitutes of both the cows and the *viprāh* are not merely the sense organs but are also inclusive of *manas* and learning. In this scheme of things, while cows symbolise the sense organs, the *viprāh* stand for *manas* and learning. The sense organs submit their sensations to *manas* which having transformed them into percepts and concepts offers them to *Ātman* in the form of learning in the same way as cows returning from the pasture are milked by the *viprā* and the milk is poured into the pitcher of *Soma*.

Coming to this end, *Yāska's ādhidaivika* interpretation, which otherwise seemed to have lost its way in the middle, acquires a certain relevance in this scheme of things. The rays of the sun may be treated as symbolic of the sense organs while the sun itself as that of *Ātman*. The idea of the

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11 एते एव सोमं गावः धेनवः इन्द्रियाणि वावश्यमानानि कामयमानानि आत्मानं यन्ति।
एवमेव सोमं विप्राः इन्द्रियाणि मतिभिः पृच्छमानानि कामयमानानि आत्मानं यन्ति।
एवमेव सोमः सुतः पूयते अज्यमानः। अयमेवात्मा च सप्त ऋषयः च संनवन्ते।
तानि इमानि एतस्मिन् आत्मनि एकं भवन्ति। इति आत्मगतिमाचष्टे।। 11 *Ibid., XIV.15*

symbolisation of *Ātman* by the sun derives support from the direct *Ṛgvedic* statement to the effect that *Sūrya* is the *Ātman* of all including both, the mobile and immobile.[12] In view of this possibility, Yāska's *ādhidaivika* interpretation may normally be used as a stepping stone to the integral interpretation which in any case is *ādhyātmika*, spiritual, from his viewpoint also.

Yāska perceives the same relationship of sense organs and mind with *Ātman* in yet another mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas*. The mantra rendered literally, as again by Griffith, reads as follows:

"*Of the co-born they call the seventh single born; the six twin pairs are called Rishis, children of Gods. Their good gifts sought of men are ranged in order due, and various in their form move for the Lord who guides.*"[13]

Obviously nothing is clear from the translation. It talks of a group of seven things which are born together, the seventh, however, being born of the one. The group of the six ones comprises seers who are supposed to be born of gods. The objects desired by these six seers are provided to them as their dwellings. Although diversified according to their forms, these seers are moving uniformly towards something stable.

Sāyaṇa makes a travesty of the meaning of the mantra by associating these details with the six regular seasons and by conceiving of a seventh one out of the extra month added to the lunar calendar each third year. There is not much difficulty in this interpretation so far. But how to account for the characterisation of the six seasons as born of gods while the seventh one as born of the One? *Sāyaṇa's* argument that the sun remains absent in the extra month is not acceptable at all. *Griffith's* following *Sāyaṇa* is perhaps due to his inability to think of any other possible way out. *Sāyaṇa* makes a travesty of the meaning of the mantra by associating these details with the six regular seasons and by conceiving of a seventh one out of the extra month added to the lunar calendar each third year. There is not much difficulty in this interpretation so far. But how to account for the characterisation of the

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12 सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च। *RV.I.115.1.*

13 तेषामिष्टानि विहितानि धामशः स्थात्रे रेजन्ते विकृतानि रुपशः। *Ibid.I.164.15.*

six seasons as born of gods while the seventh one as born of the One? *Sāyaṇa's* argument that the sun remains absent in the extra month is not acceptable at all. *Griffith's* following *Sāyaṇa* is perhaps due to his inability to think of any other possible way out.

It is strange that neither of them took any notice of *Yāska's* interpretation of the mantra which is so convincing. As has been done by him in case of the previously quoted mantras, here also he applies the same formula of relationship of sense organs and mind with *Ātman*. He takes the group of six agencies being born together and operating from their respective resorts as standing for the six sense organs including *manas* while the seventh one he identifies as *Ātman*. He further explains that whatever is desired by the sense organs and *manas*, is made available to them in the form of their respective foods, that is, their respective objects of sensation and perception. He also points out that if the number of *indriyas* were taken to be seven, as was the case with a mantra discussed already, *Ātman* in that case would have to be counted as the eighth one, since the latter always stands over and above them and as the point of unification of them in itself.[14]

Yāska characterises this interpretation as *ādhyātmika*, spiritual, as it reveals the Vedic seer's understanding of the *Ātman*.[15] He, however, offers an *Ādhidaivika* interpretation of it also in which he identifies the seers in the form of rays of the sun while the seventh one in the form of the sun itself.[16] Here also *Yāska* might have put forward the *Ādhidaivika* interpretation to serve as a stepping stone to the *Ādhyātmika* one as is usual with the Vedic way of thinking and *sādhanā* as epitomised in the sacred *Gāyatrī* mantra itself. *Sāyaṇa, Griffith*, etc., seem to have been misguided in their interpretation of the mantra partly by taking this latter one to the exclusion of the former, as the phenomenon of the seasons is intimately connected with the sun, and partly by a group of mantras

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14 सहजातानामिन्द्रियाणामात्मा सप्तमः। तेषामिष्टानि वा कान्तानि वा कान्तानि वा गतानि वा मतानि वा नतानि वा अन्नेन सह संमोदन्ते। यत्र इमानि सप्त ऋषीणानि इन्द्रियाणि एभ्यः परः आत्मा। तानि अस्मिन् एकं भवन्ति। *Nir.XIV.19.*

15 इति आत्मगतिमाचष्टे। *Ibid., XIV.19.*

16 सहजातानां षण्णाम् आदित्यः सप्तमः। यत्र एतानि सप्त ऋषीणानि ज्योतीषि तेभ्यः परः आदित्यः। तानि एतस्मिन् एकं भवन्ति। *Ibid., XIV.19.*

immediately preceding this one. Being totally symbolic, this mantra also happened to be mistaken by them as continuing the same theme of division of year into different durations such as months, half- months, days and nights. This is the danger involved in symbolic way of expression. When the expression happens to be totally symbolic, it becomes vulnerable to such distorted interpretations as this one.

The seriousness with which the Vedic genius looked upon the problem of relationship between *Atman* and sense organs, including mind, is reflected in the *Upaniṣads* in the form of various stories, anecdotes and statements throughout, such as the story of *Umā Haimavatī* in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, allegory of the chariot in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and discourse between *Prajāpati* and *Indra* in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. In the last one of these, for instance, it has been observed that the sense organs are just various sorts of openings of *Ātman* to the external world it has chosen to have. According to this scheme of things, when the *Ātman* chooses to have its contact with space outside, it assumes the form of the eye-person, *cākṣuṣa puruṣa*, and opens out itself in the form of the eye; when it wants to smell things outside, it assumes the form of ear-person and opens out itself in the form of the ear; when it wants to speak out to the external world, it assumes the form of the *vāk*-person and opens itself out in the form of the organ of speech, so on and so forth in regard to other sense organs also.[17] Similar to this is the story of the formation of *manas* according to the *Upaniṣad*. When the *Atman*, tells us the *Upaniṣad*, wished to think, it assumed the form of the mind-person and began to operate as the *manas*. *Manas* has been characterised by it as divine eye, *daivam cakṣuh*.[18]

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17 अथ यत्रैतदाकाशमनुविषण्णं चक्षुः स चाक्षुषः पुरुषो दर्शनाय चक्षुः। अथ यो वेदेदं जिघ्राणीति स आत्मा गन्धाय घ्राणम्। अथ यो वेदेदमभिव्याहरणीति स आत्माभिव्याहाराय वाक्। अथ यो वेदेदं शृणवानीति स आत्मा श्रवणाय श्रोत्रम्। *Ch.Up. VIII.12.4.*

18 अथ यो वेदेदं मन्वानीति स आत्मा मनोऽस्य दैवं चक्षुः। स वा एष एतेन दैवेन चक्षुषा मनसैतान् कामान् पश्यन् रमते। *Ibid., VIII.12.5.*

Yāska's interpretation of *Ṛgveda I.164.15* discussed above[1] in terms of relationship between sense organs and mind on the one hand and mind and *Ātman* on the other, unfortunately very much left unnoticed so far, opens a new vista for the understanding of the group of seven mantras following it in the same hymn and exercising the mind of scholars since long without any acceptable solution coming forth. To restate the conclusions of the foregoing discussion for the sake of ready reference, the mantra talks of seven things six of which are sense organs and the seventh one is *manas*. Sense organs are said to be found in twins. Thus, there must be only three sense organs meant here which somehow bear the spectacle of being in twins. They obviously are eyes, ears and nose. They, no doubt, are most prominent amongst the sense organs particularly in regard to knowledge of the external world. Their formation in twins itself indicates to their prominence in the scheme of Nature. In any case, their common duality must have played an important role in the eye of the seer in putting them together. The variation of five, six and seven in the number of sense organs, as we have seen beforehand, is evidently based on actual functioning, inclusion of *manas* in the category of sense organs and the number of holes the sense organs form in the head respectively. In that row, if the mantra under consideration takes a view different from the above three in talking of them as twins, there is nothing surprising. Over all, they represent all the sense organs excluding *manas*. It is these sense organs which are considered as six seers born of the Divine as twins. There is adequate provision made by Nature herself for fulfilment of their respective desires. Having assumed as many forms meant for as many ways of operation, it is they which ultimately tend to something stable in us, *i.e.*, the *Ātman*.

Having brought home this much so suggestively and symbolically, the seer proceeds with another configuration of ideas whose meaning has remained a problem until this date, with so many guesses put forward but all of them failing eventually on account of lacking in conviction. The concerned mantra talks of a group of females who are reported to the seer as males. Being blind, the seer observes, he himself cannot make out what is really true. It is only the sighted who can determine what is

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1 सप्तकंजानां सप्तर्थमाहुरेकजं षळिद् यमा ऋषयो देवजा इति।
तेषामिष्टानि विहितानि धामशः स्थात्रे रेजन्ते विकृतानि रूपशः।। *RV.I.164.15.*

what. This sightedness, however, has nothing to do with the physical sight. It is the sightedness of the seer which can decide whether they are males or females as a matter of fact. Such a seer, no matter howsoever young, would be equal to the father of father by virtue of the extraordinary profundity of his wisdom.[2]

The literal sense of the mantra can best be surmised from *Griffith's* translation of it which is as follows:

"*They told me those were males, though truly females; he who hath eyes sees this, the blind discerns not.*

The son who is a sage hath comprehended:
who knows this rightly is his father's father."

Griffith also points out how Wilson regards this mantra as "*a piece of grammatical mysticism*", inasmuch as "*raśmi*, a ray of the sun, here personified as a female, is properly a noun masculine". He himself characterises the meaning of the mantra as "*obscure*". According to *Grassmann*, as mentioned by *Griffith*, the mantra, means that "*Night and Morning, both feminine, have received the masculine name of Day.*"

Sāyaṇa explains the mantra in a different way. In his view, here in this mantra the question of femininity and masculinity concerns the rays of the sun. The rays come down to the earth and bear water with them like the female the embryo. In this respect, they may figuratively be treated as females. But, by virtue of pouring the same water on the earth subsequently, they may also be taken as males. *Sāyaṇa* considers this point as a great secret and thinks that only the seer could discover it. Needless to point out how flimsy is *Sāyaṇa's* explanation. He, however, explains the mantra in an alternative way also. Characterising this alternative explanation as *ādhyātmika*, he observes that here the real idea sought to be conveyed is the genderlessness of *Ātman*, which as such cannot be described as male or female from the viewpoint of its essence. Its assumption of masculinity or femininity is just incidental. The difficulty with this explanation is that it has nothing to support it in the context. The context talks of a plurality of persons whose gender is in

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2 स्त्रियः सतीस्तां उ मे पुंस आहुः पश्यदक्षण्वान्न वि चेतदन्धः।
कविर्यः पुत्रः स ईमा चिकेत यस्ता विजानात् स पितुष्पितासत्।। *Ibid., I.164.16*

doubt and not of anyone person whosoever. In any case, as per the context, those, whose gender is in doubt, must be the six holes in the human head forming the three sense organs, namely eye, ear, and nose. They may also be taken as suggestive of all the five sense organs.

It is quite understandable that the acute problem of indecision about gender is most likely to arise in case of persons or things being in the neuter gender. Basing ourselves on this solid ground we may argue that those involved in this disputation must apparently at least be neuter in gender so as to pose the problem of their precise gender in terms of the dominant ones, i.e., the masculine and the feminine. Incidentally, the word *indriya*, sense organ, is neuter in gender. Now, the problem of decision about the sense organs in terms of masculinity and femininity must depend on the mode of their functioning.

As a matter of fact, the sense organs, including *manas*, are meant for gathering and processing sensations generated from their contact with the outside world. In that regard, they really are to be taken as females. But instead of keeping themselves confined to their basic function, they tend to behave as the real master of the personality. This over-ambitiousness of them results in the relegation of the eighth principle, i.e., *Ātman* to the background, creating, thus, a horrible situation of imbalance. Redressal of this position is possible only by bringing *Ātman* to the fore and restricting the area of operation of the sense organs and mind as subordinate to the former.

This by no means is anything easy and insignificant. Had it been so, the world would have solved this problem long ago. But, contrary to that, the more it is advancing ahead in other things, the more it is getting itself enmeshed in this horrible state of predominance of sense organs and mind to subordination or even denial of the very existence of *Ātman*. *Dīrghatamas*, the seer of this hymn, indeed, is so much preoccupied with this problem that he refers to it in the very fourth mantra of the hymn through the query as to what is the source of the *Ātman* particularly in contrast to other components of personality such as breath, bone, flesh and blood, etc., having obviously their source in the physical nature.[3]

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3 को ददर्श प्रथमं जायमानमस्थन्वन्तं यदनस्था बिभर्ति।
भूम्या असुरसृगात्मा क्व स्वित्को विद्वांसमुप गात् प्रष्टुमेतत्।। *Ibid., I.164.4.*

Being so much concerned with the position of the *Atman* already, if he, assuming the role of the ignorant on himself, states his confusion about the relationship of sense organs and mind on the one hand and the *Atman* on the other in the present symbolic way, there is nothing surprising in it.

As regards the relationship, it may not look so serious apparently if it is considered as confined to the individual himself and in exclusion of everything else, for that way it seems to be just the problem of the individual alone. But that surely is not the case at all. The instrument of knowledge we are provided with has necessarily to operate on something serving as the object of knowledge. That object obviously is the external world to whatever extent it goes. The process of knowing the external world consists in the senses gathering sensations of it and submitting the same to mind. Even mind itself is not anyway the final authority in regard to what it receives from the outside world in the form of sensations. It in itself undergoes modifications constantly under the stress of the operation of senses in the waking state and that of memory in the state of dream. Distancing itself from both these states, the state of dreamless sleep testifies to the fact that there is something higher and more fundamental than mind even as the point of merger and reappearance of the latter. How mind with its entire paraphernalia of senses and their field of operation, that is, the external world, is related to that inmost being within us, is the problem of all problems, as it is most fundamental of all problems, be they actual or possible. The problem goes to the extent of touching upon the mystery of the how and why of the mechanism under which the senses are made to operate on the external world, are enabled to receive sensations from it in five entirely different ways, are made to submit the same to the mind which reconstructs objects cognitively out of those disparate sensations and then passes its re-constructions to something interior to it. Thus, from this perspective, the problem of relationship between the five senses and mind on the one hand and *Ātman* on the other is so fundamental and comprehensive as to include in it everything whatever concerning both the life and the world.

It is in view of this gravity of the problem that the seer, notwithstanding all his wisdom, feels as if he is totally blind in this regard knowing nothing as a matter of fact, a petty child of the child. If, even after having discovered so many things including the principle of gravitation, *Newton* was so humble as to feel that he was able only to collect a few pebbles on the shore of the ocean of knowledge, *Dīrghatamas* is obviously still

humbler in feeling that he knows nothing about the mystery of life and the world and in getting himself prepared to be the child of his child, provided the latter was able to enlighten him on the problem in any essential way. The misplaced dominance of senses over mind and of both over *Ātman* has made the whole situation so hazy that the common sense, which the seer poses to represent, sees things topsy-turvy.

That this is the precise theme of the mantra under discussion, is what *Yāska* saw long long ago and yet it could not be cognised as such by any of the commentators and writers on the mantra including Sāyaṇaand Western scholars both as is evident from the details given above. *Yāska's* understanding of the females here as symbolic representation of the sense organs is evident from his remark on the mantra that `females' here stand for the senses used in fetching sensations of sound, touch, form, taste and smell.[4] He, however, drifts slightly off the track in the identification of the sixth principle involved in this account. He names it as *prāṇa* and regards it as distinct from senses as, unlike them, it does not come into direct touch with the external world.[5] Evidently by *prāṇa, Yāska* does not mean here the breath but the principle operating as the co-ordinator of what the senses fetch to it. If this be the case, by *prāṇa* what he too means is simply *manas* rather than breath. Even then, however, it would have been better, had he used *manas* instead of *prāṇa* in this context, as *Dīrghatamas*, the seer of the mantra himself makes positively the use of the word *manas* moving around it as one of the central principles in these mantras. This is evident from the very third mantra hence, where the query has been put forward with the same seriousness of purpose as in case of the mantra under discussion as to the source of the divine or luminous *manas*.[6] Moreover, use of the plural *striyaḥ* for the objects of seeming misunderstanding on the part of the seer shows that mere *prāṇa*, no matter be it taken as suggestive of *manas*, will not work here. The plurality of them obviously requires consideration of the senses and *manas* together as the objects of seeming misunderstanding on his part.

That the central theme of this extremely symbolic mantra is really the precise relationship among senses, mind and *Atman* is evident from the next six mantras of the hymn also. The immediately next mantra, for instance, talks of a cow bearing her calf somewhere intermediate to the

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4 स्त्रियः एव एताः शब्दस्पर्शरूपरसगन्धहारिण्यः। *Nir.XIV.20.*

5 ताः अमुं पुंशब्देन निराहारः प्राणः इति पश्यन् कष्टात् न विजानाति अन्धः। *Ibid., XIV.20.*

6 देवं मनः कुतो अधि प्रजातम्। *RV.I.164.18.*

extreme above and extreme below. Further it has been observed in the mantra that nothing is known about the direction of the movement of her nor about the region which she has reached and has given birth to her calf in, though in any case it is apart from the group of the cows.[7] The calf referred to here is *manas* which in the next mantra has been characterised as having the divine origin, *devam manah*. Accordingly, the mother of this calf must be divine herself. As such, she may be identified with *Aditi* or the divine *Vāk*. The rest of the cows, apart from which the calf is born, must, therefore, stand for the senses. Being of divine origin on the one hand and yet being related with the rest of the cows on the other, *manas* symbolised by the calf gets very much explained in its dual role of co-ordinator of the senses and agent of the *Ātman*. As the *manas* does all this quite imperceptibly, it has symbolically been stated to have been born at a certain place one does not know where.

This problem, therefore, continues to form the basic theme of the next mantra also in the hymn with this difference, however, that while in the previous mantra the origin of *manas* was talked of with reference to its mother, in the present one it is being surmised with reference to its father. Here it has been pointed out by implication that he alone can understand the origin of the divine mind who knows its father lying intermediate to the highest and the lowest in the spectrum of the totality of the reality. The problem of the origin and location of *manas* has been considered by the seer as so difficult and yet important as to require a man of wisdom of the highest order, as a seer is supposed to be, to unveil the curtain of mystery enshrouding it.[8]

More or less the same problem of relationship between the higher and the lower continues to dictate the next mantra also through another set of symbols. While in the three contiguous mantras quoted above the polarisation of the concerned symbolic terms was between the male and the female, the higher the lower, and the father and the mother, in the present mantra it concerns the eater and the food represented symbolically by *Indra* and *Soma*. Here in the first hemistich the proposition has been put dilemmatically that those who are moving hitherward are taken to move thitherward and those who are moving

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7 अवः परेण पुर एनावरेण पृदा वत्सं बिभ्रती गौरुदस्थात्।
सा कद्रीची कं स्विदर्धं परागात् क्व स्वित् सूते नहि यूथे अन्तः।। *Ibid.*, I.164.17.

8 अवः परेण पितरं यो अस्यानुवेद पर एनावरेण।
कवीयमानः क इह प्र वोचद् देवं मनः कुतो अधि प्रजातम्।। *Ibid.*, I.164.18.

thitherward are taken to be moving hitherward. By way of elucidating this proposition it has been pointed out in the second hemistich of the mantra that *Indra* and *Soma* combined bear the burden of the cosmos like the pair of horses yoked together and as such drawing the chariot.[9] As per the Vedic accounts, one of the most significant features of *Indra* is his taking *Soma* while that of *Soma* is being taken by *Indra*. Thus the most prominent relationship between the two is that of the eater and the food. Now to de-symbolise the account, *Indra* represents the luminous mind while *Soma* the sensory stuff made available to that mind through the agency of the senses. Thus, while senses are the feeders of the mind, the latter is getting fed by them. It is this relationship between the two, the seer observes, which forms the axle of the cosmic chariot on the one hand and of our life on the other.

The problem of relationship between the sensual and the spiritual is brought to a still higher plane in the same continuation in the immediately following mantra which, as a matter of fact, has come to occupy the central position in *Vedantic* disputations. It talks of two birds, beautiful, closely associated with each other, friendly and clasping one and the same tree from all around with this difference, however, that while one of them is eating eagerly the fruits of the tree, the other one is just looking around.[10] Here the bird eating the fruit is the lower self within us which by using the mechanism of *manas* and sense organs is busy in the enjoyment of the objects of senses. The other bird, on the other hand, represents the higher self, coinciding with the Supreme Being lying there self-contented in the infinity of his knowledge and wisdom. Here looking around is symbolical of being there in his limitless knowledge. It is significant to note that while in the beginning of the series of these mantras the polarity discussed concerned the sense organs and the luminous mind, in this mantra it has shifted to the polarity between the higher self and the lower self. What has served as the stepping stone in this shifting is the symbol of eating introduced covertly by the preceding mantra and stated explicitly in the present one.

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9 ये अर्वाञ्चस्तां उ परोच आहुर्ये पराञ्चस्तां उ अर्वाच आहुः।
इन्द्रश्च या चकथुः सोम तानि धुरा न युक्ता रजसो वहन्ति।। *Ibid., I.164.19.*

10 द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्यनश्नन्नन्यो अभि चाकशीति ।। *Ibid., I.164.20.*

The next two mantras in this series are devoted to showing the way of removal of the dichotomy and reunion between the two principles, the individual self and the Supreme Being living together on the tree of the cosmos if taken universally, and on the tree of the human personality if considered individually. The mantras under consideration also show how the universal spectacle has come to assume the individual form. The first one of these mantras talks of the beautiful-feathered birds giving voice constantly to their respective portions of immortality and how it is in course of this voicing that the ruler and protector of the cosmic tree laden with all his wisdom has come to enter into the seer himself represented by one of those birds, and shorn of all matruity.[11] The entrance of the Supreme into the individual self, thus, removes the dichotomy between the individual and the universal on this plane, and between the spiritual and the sensual persisting on the lower plane forming the motif of the mantras discussed earlier.

In the next and last mantra in this series, there is an account of complete reconciliation of the polarity brought out through the same symbols of birds and the tree. Here the universe has continued to be represented by the tree. The individual selves are taken as birds living and procreating on this tree in a great multitude. The experiences undergone by them are conceived as the fruits of the cosmic tree which the selves are supposed to taste assuming the form of birds. The sweetest of all these fruits, however, the mantra observes, lies at the top and can be tasted only by one who knows the Father, that is, the creator and sustainer of the universe.[12]

In the form of this reconciliation is found out the solution to the problem raised by the seer in the fourth mantra of the hymn, as stated above, as to the source of the *Ātman* beyond the range of the rest of the constituents of the human personality. The reconciliation lies in the cognisance of the entrance of the Supreme Being as the principle of spirituality into the human personality formed out of matter. The seer suggests that without admittance of the Supreme Being as the source of our spiritual being, we cannot explain the co-ordination of the spiritual and the physical in this

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11 यत्रा सुपर्णा अमृतस्य भागमनिमेषं विदथाभिस्वरन्ति।
इनो विश्वस्य भुवनस्य गोपाः स मा धीरः पाकमत्रा विवेश।। *Ibid., I.164.21.*

12 यस्मिन् वृक्षे मध्वदः सुपर्णा निविशन्ते सुवते चाधि विश्वे।
तस्येदाहुः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वग्रे तन्नोन्नेशद्यः पितरं न वेद।। *Ibid., I.164.22.*

world. All this has been made out so eloquently through an array of symbols including the male and the female, the cow and the calf, Indra and *Soma*, the bird, the tree, the fruit and the eating. What a massive formation of symbols! It was not surprising, therefore, that it could not be penetrated even until recently in spite of a large number of scholars trying to break through it for thousands of years without any tangible success and rather getting beguiled by one aspect of the formation or the other, the solar being the most prominent one amongst them. As a matter of fact, the solar phenomenon has been brought in here so prominently just for the sake of explaining the physical in its massivity as related to the spiritual through intermediation of the sense organs and the sense-mind.

To sum up, the real clue to penetration of this formidable formation of symbols lies in *Yāska's* cryptic remark quoted at *footnote No.4* above that the females misreported to the seer as males are really symbolical of the five senses, i.e., those of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching.

IV

Rgveda X.71.5 speaks of a person who has taken milk in good quantity and therefore stands unrivalled in contests. On the contrary, the other person moves along with what are cows just in appearance, listening to words which are bereft of fruits and flowers.[1] Obviously the mantra tells us mostly of cow, milk, cowherd, taking of milk in good quantity and facing contests boldly and successfully. In the second place in prominence, it makes a passing reference to a funny situation of fruitlessness and flowerlessness of speech. Thus the details embodied in the mantra are mutually incongruent if taken at the face value, since cow has nothing to do with language and the latter with flowers and fruits. Were this mantra to have been taken in isolation, it would apparently have implied keeping cows well if one wanted to get milk from her and fare well in physical contests and reaping fruits from trees if maintained well. Presence of the word *vācam*, however, puts a break to such a facile interpretation. Taking cognisance of it as well as of the context of the mantra, *Yāska* straightaway substitutes cow by *vāk* and states cryptically, though, that the real thrust of meaning of the mantra concerns *vāk* itself and not any real cow or cowherd at all. Proceeding on the same line, he substitutes milk by meaning of words and drinking of milk by the knowing of the real meaning. Likewise, he understands the physical context in the sense of the intellectual and spiritual. As regards the imagery of the flower and the fruit, he takes them also as not products of any tree but as that of *vāk* itself with this alternative, however, that the flower of the meaning may in one case be symbolic of the benefits of sacrifice and in the other that of the attainment of divine while the fruit in one case may stand for attainment of the divine and in the other it may refer to the spiritual elevation.[2] Thus, according to him, cow in the Veda may be symbolic of the Vedic word, milk of its meaning, cowherd of the aspirant of the meaning, flower of the external benefit of this knowledge while fruit that of the most essential one.

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1 उत त्वꣳ सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनꣳ हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु।
अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवाꣳ अफलामपुष्पाम्।। *RV.X.71.5.*

2 अप्येकं वाक्सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुः। विपीतार्थम्। विज्ञातार्थं यं नाप्नुवन्ति वाग्ज्ञेयेषु। अधेन्वा ह्येष चरति मायया वाक्प्रतिरूपया। नास्मै कामान् दुग्धे वाक्। यो वाचं श्रुतवान् भवत्यफलामपुष्पामिति। अफलास्मै अपुष्पा वाग्भवति। अर्थ वाचः पुष्पफलमाह। याज्ञदैवते पुष्पफले देवताध्यात्मे वा।। *Nir.I.25.*

The equation leads to the conclusion that in *Yāska's* viewpoint, spiritual enlightenment or elevation is the basic thrust of ideas in the Veda, attainment of heavenly beatitude and sacrificial benefits being subordinate to it while physical objects and functions being just means for bringing home this thrust symbolically so as to get them materialised.

Another significant symbolic usage in the Veda attended to by *Yāska* concerns representation of the phenomenon of life as a stream or reservoir of water and sacrifice as a boat. The imagery occurs in a *Rgvedic* mantra seen by *Kṛṣṇa Aṅgirasa*. It talks of a group of persons who at the primeval stage involved themselves in the invocation of the Divine and created something worth listening to and yet not being easily fordable. In contrast to them, there is an account of those who are not capable of taking to the boat of sacrifice and consequently get sunk into destitution.[3] While commenting on this mantra, *Yāska* traces the derivation of the word *pṛthak* to the root *prath* suggesting thereby the eminence of the position attained by the primeval invokers of the Divine.

According to *Yāska's* suggestion, this position is not only distinct from that attained by other people but is also one of width and openness. By virtue of their devotion, maintains *Yāska*, these devotees of the Divine accomplished noble deeds which are difficult to be accomplished by those who are not devout like them. These noble deeds as well as the devotion lying at their root are characterised together by *Yāska* after the seer as sacrifice. This sacrifice, in its turn, is conceived as a boat capable of taking people across channels and reservoirs of water unfordable otherwise. As per this state of things, those who take up to the way of sacrifice in life, are imagined as boarding a boat, as it were, and sailing safely towards their divine destination. In contrast to them, those who are not devout and hence lack in the inclination to sacrifice and doing noble deeds, get sunk into the water which has been conceived by *Yāska* as symbolic of the debt of life. Emergence and sustenance of life in this world, from this viewpoint, is a process involving contributions of all those who are contributory to it. This, if taken stock of, would be oceanic in magnitude looming large before the person concerned as a sea of debts. Devotion, sacrifice and accomplishment of noble deeds are the only means by which one can get cleared of this debt. Clearance of it is like boarding the boat sailing for the divine destination. In the absence of such a boat,

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3 पृथक् प्रायन् प्रथमा देवहूतयोऽकृण्वत श्रवस्यानि दुष्टरा।
न ये शेकुर्यज्ञियां नावमारुहमीर्मैव ते न्यविशन्त केपथः ।। *RV.X.44.6.*

one is sure to get sunk into the water of debt. Further, this water has been conceived by *Yāska* as symbolic of this world itself.[4]

Another important instance of symbolic interpretation we find in *Yāska* concerns the struggle between *Indra* and *Vṛtra*. This struggle occupies a lot of space in the *Samhitās*, particularly the *Ṛgveda* forming the most important single theme of its contents. What *Yāska* thinks of this important theme is interesting. Statement of his viewpoint on this theme occurs in course of his comment on *Ṛgveda I.32.10*. The mantra talks of waters moving constantly and having submerged in them the body of *Vṛtra*. After *Vṛtra* gets killed by *Indra*, the mantra states, his body lies enshrouded in long darkness while the waters make inroad in the secret place of his hiding.[5]

While commenting on this mantra, *Yāska* on behalf of the *Nairukta* school of Vedic interpretation identifies *Vṛtra* in the form of cloud. In justification to this proposition, he makes out a significant point regarding formation of cloud and consequent rain. He observes to the effect that cloud is formed through combined action and interaction of water and light. This observation, no doubt, is highly significant particularly in view of the antiquity of *Yāska*. Needless to point out that this is precisely how cloud gets formed. It is nothing but a mass of water vaporised by rays of the sun and moving visibly in the horizon. In course of its movement in the horizon, the cloud appears to assume various forms. Particularly at the time of rain, it appears to present a spectacle of war with movement of patches of cloud like chariots, elephants and horses and the shining of lightning appearing as swords in brisk use. In view of this similarity of the Vedic accounts of the encounter of *Indra* and *Vṛtra* with the scenario of cloud, lightning and rain, *Yāska*, along with other scholars of his school, thinks that *Vṛtra* is simply the cloud appearing to be engaged by lightning so as to shed rain. *Indra*, in that circumstance, would be a figurative representation of the principle responsible for making clouds dissolve in the form of water. The apparent resistance of the cloud in this process

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4 पृथक् प्रथतेः। प्रथमाः देवहूतयः। ये देवान् आह्वयन्त। अकुर्वत श्रवणीयानि यशांसि दुरनुकराणि अन्यैः। ये अशक्नुवन् यज्ञियां नावमारोढुम्। अथ ये नाशक्नुवन् यज्ञियां नावमारोढुम्। इमैव ते न्यविशन्त। इह एव ते न्यविशन्त। ऋणे ह एव ते न्यविशन्त। अस्मिन्नेव लोके इति वा। *Nir.V.25.*

5 अतिष्ठन्तीनामनिवेशनानां काष्ठानां मध्ये निहितं शरीरम्।
वृत्रस्य निण्यं वि चरन्त्यापो दीर्घं तम आशयदिन्द्रशत्रुः।। *RV.I.32.10.*

would from that viewpoint be considered as *Vṛtra's* unwillingness to submit to *Indra*. Thus, according to *Yāska*, the entire story of war between *Indra* and *Vṛtra* is simply a figurative account of the spectacle of cloud, lightning and rain.[6]

This interpretation is obviously *Ādhibhautika* and it would have been helpful had *Yāska* appended this remark below the comment. But, as a matter of fact, he makes such notes only in the case of *Ādhidaivika* and *Ādhyātmika* interpretations and scarcely in the case of the *Ādhibhautika*. This self-imposed economy of words seems to have been imperative in restraining him from making such a remark here which otherwise would have been immensely useful in deciding the real thrust of meaning of the Veda. In the absence of any such remark, scholars following *Yāska* usually found it quite convenient to interpret *Indra-Vṛtra* accounts in terms of cloud, lightning and rain caring little for the possibility of other two ways of interpretation, i.e., the *Ādhidaivika* and the *Ādhyātmika*. This legacy of misunderstanding was found handy by modern scholars to beat back the possibility of those interpretations to the extent of almost finality.

Another significant contribution to the understanding of the Vedic symbolism which *Yāska* has made concerns the monosyllabic word *Om*. The word occupies the most prominent position in the Vedic tradition right from the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*. Even as early a text as the *Katha Upaniṣad* characterises it as the quintessence of all the Vedas besides forming the objective of all austerities and self-restraints.[7] This word, however, though available right from the *Yajurveda*, is not visibly traceable in the *Ṛgveda*, the fountainhead of the entire Vedic literature. This conspicuous absence creates problem in the interpretation of several Vedic passages including one referred to right now besides giving a jolt to the traditional belief that the sacred word *Om* is the source of all the Vedas. It has also led to the suggestion that this word is a somewhat later innovation and has managed to be associated necessarily with the recitation of each and every Vedic mantra, just like the *Vyāhrtis* getting added to the sacred *Gāyatrī* mantra.

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6 वृत्रः मेघः इति नैरुक्ताः। अपां च ज्योतिषश्च मिश्रीभावकर्मणो वर्षकर्म जायते। तत्रोपमार्थेन युद्धवर्णा भवन्ति। *Nir. II.16.*

7 सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद् वदन्ति। यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्। । *Kaṭha Up.II.15*

Yāska, however, comes to the rescue of the traditional belief through his remark on a particular *Rgvedic* mantra. The mantra concerned has been seen by *Dīrghatamas*. It talks of *parame vyoman* as the source and resort of *rks* wherein dwell all the gods and further asserts that he who does not understand this *parame vyoman* has nothing to gain from the *rks*.[8] While observing like this, the mantra also introduces the word *akşara* immediately preceding *parame vyoman* and that also in the same case and number. This *akşara*, therefore, may plausibly be taken as an adjective qualifying *parame vyoman. Akşara* obviously denotes the state of imperishability. In that case, *aksare parame vyoman* would mean the imperishable highest heaven. If this meaning is accepted, that imperishable highest heaven would have to be accepted as the source as well resort of *rks* and gods both.

There is, however, an alternative possibility which may turn *akşara* into a substantive. In that case, it would be possible to take the *akşara* itself as the receptacle of *rks* while *parame vyoma* as the receptacle of *akşara*.

It is this second possibility which opens the scope for tracing the word *Om* in the *Ṛgveda*. *Om* is obviously monosyllabic. As such, it can legitimately be regarded as an *akşara*, though not the simple one. On account of being a combination of *a, u,* and *m*, it does not remain an *akşara* from the linguistic viewpoint. But from the metrical viewpoint, it, to be sure, is an *akşara*, as this viewpoint treats *au* also as well an *akşara* as any of the simple vowels such as *a, i, u,* and *e*. As the viewpoint of the seer would much more probably have been metrical than linguistic, it is quite legitimate to infer that by *akşara* in the mantra he is intending primarily the monosyllabic sound *Om* itself rather than sheer imperishability qualifying *parame vyoman*. It is also true at the same time, however, that the word *akşara* in the sense of syllable even is not exclusive of the sense of imperishability, since metrically, at least, syllable has been considered as the last unbreakable unit of language. Moreover, if language be admitted as co-ordinate to reality, as has straightaway been stated in the *Ṛgveda* itself, there does not remain any difference between *akşara* as a syllable and that as qualifying the imperishability of the highest heaven, as is meant by *parame vyoman*.[9]

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8. ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः।
यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत् तद्विदुस्त इमे समासते।। *RV.I.164.39.*

9 यावद् ब्रह्म विष्ठितं तावती वाक्। *Ibid., X.114.8.*

As regards *Yāska*, in course of his comment on the mantra, he naturally comes to concentrate on the word *akşara* and happens to ask as to what it is. At this juncture, he comes to be reminded of *Śākapūṇi's* view on this word. According to him, *Śākapūṇi* understood by *akşara* in this context as *Om* itself which *Yāska* on his behalf characterises as *Vāk* rather than *Śabda* as per the usage in the earlier part of the Vedic tradition. This shows the depth of the sense in which he himself takes the word in this context at least. Moving forward from this statement he further observes: "*The Rks are contemplated upon in the imperishable highest transcendence of all things.*" It is clear from this statement that he does not refute the view of *Śākapūṇi* anyway and rather accepting it approvingly he suggests to the possibility of coinciding of *akşara* in both the senses referred to above. Finally he puts the seal of his approval of it by quoting from the *Kauşītaki Brāhmaṇa* to the effect that it is the same *Akşara* which has assumed various forms in the Vedic wisdom.[10]

He, however, considers the above explanation of *Akşara* as coincident to *Om* as only one of the possibilities and not without others also, particularly on the lines of *Adhidaiva* and *Adhyatma*. By way of the possible *Ādhidaivika* explanation, he quotes one offered by the son of *Śākapūṇi*. According to the latter, *Akşara* is symbolical of the sun while gods based in *Akşara* represent the rays of the sun. As regards *Rks* said to be based in *Akşara*, he takes them as related to the sun by way of being addressed to it. Whatever of the sun stands beyond the reach of mantras, he observes, is *Akşara* in the precise sense of the term. Whether *Yāska* himself approves of this explanation or not, is not clear. From his own, however, he suggests the possibility of a third explanation, i.e., the *Ādhyātmika*. From this viewpoint, *Akşara* stands for the principle of immortality in the human personality while *Rk* for the body. Under this scheme of explanation, gods are supposed to represent the senses as all of them meet together in *Atman*, the principle of immortality.[11]

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10 कतमत् तत् एतद् अक्षरम्। ॐ इत्येषा वाक् इति शाकपूणिः। ऋचः च हि अक्षरे परमे व्यवने धीयन्ते। नानादेवतेषु च मन्त्रेषु । एतद्ध वै एतदक्षरं यत् सर्वां त्रयीं विद्यां प्रति {कौषी ब्रा 6/12} इति च ब्राह्मणम्। । *Nir.XIII.10.*

11 आदित्यः इति पुत्रः शाकपूणेः। एषः ऋक् भवति यत् एनमर्चन्ति। प्रत्यृचः सर्वाणि भूतानि। तस्य यत् अन्यत् मन्त्रेभ्यः तत् अक्षरं भवति। रश्मयः अत्र देवाः उच्यन्ते ये एतस्मिन् अधिनिषण्णाः इति अधिदैवतम्। अथ अध्यात्मम्। शरीरमत्र ऋक् उच्यते यत् एनेन अर्चन्ति। प्रत्यृचः सर्वाणि इन्द्रियाणि। तस्य यत् अविनाशि तत् अक्षरं भवति। इन्द्रियाणि अत्र देवाः उच्यन्ते यानि अस्मिन् आत्मनि एकं भवन्ति इति आत्मप्रवादाः। । *Ibid., XII.11.*

Thus once again we see how *Yāska* moves ultimately back to the sun and the *Atman* in his effort to get the basic idea embedded in the mantras. The other sorts of explanation, be they sacrificial, linguistic, metrical, historical, etc., are made subordinate to them. From amongst these two also, his final emphasis is laid on the spiritual rather than on the solar, so to say. As has already been pointed out, the solar has been introduced by him not for its own sake but for the sake of the spiritual on account of being somewhat analogous to the spectacle of the *Atman* enlarging itself in the external world through the sense organs in the same way as the sun enlarges itself by means of its rays. As the sun projects and withdraws the rays alternatively, even so the *Atman* projects out of itself the senses including *manas* and withdraws them within itself after they have served its intended purpose.

This way of interpretation or rather de-symbolisation of the Vedic mantras is not any of *Yāska's* invention. It is embedded in the *Brāhmaṇas* already. But its most succinct account is to be found in the *Asya Vāmīya* hymn itself as discussed in the preceding lecture. *Dīrghatamas*, the seer, opens the hymn obviously with an account of the solar phenomenon but after a few mantras settles down to the investigation of the *Atman* and its relationship with mind and senses and through them with the external world itself as formed, revealed and dominated by the sun. This close correspondence between the solar and the spiritual spectacles forms the central theme of the Vedas. Having rightly been cognised as such by *Yāska* as well as by the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*, it has been utilised by him in his formulation of the *Ādhidaivika* and *Ādhyātmika* ways of de-symbolisation of the symbolic stuff in the Veda.

The equivalent of `symbol' in the Sanskrit tradition is *pratika*. This significant word also has been noted down by *Yāska* though only incidentally. Even then, however, a review of the word as used by him is likely to shed some light on our perusal on these lines.

By way of commenting on a mantra seen by *Parāśara* and making use of the word *pratika, Yāska* comes to spell out such expressions as *bhaya-praiīka, mahāpratika* and *diptapratika* as explanatory of the *Rgvedic tveşapraika* suggesting thereby that the word *pratika* has been used here in the sense of appearance as distinct from but expressive of the reality.[12]

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12 त्वेषप्रतीका भयप्रतीका महाप्रतीका दीप्तप्रतीका वा। *Ibid., X.21*

This, to a great extent, is the function of symbol. It seeks to represent an object or thought-content in such a way as to communicate the intended message in the best possible form, almost in the same way as the lustre of the fire brings home the fact of the presence of the fire. It is in this sense that lustre has been described by the seer, as quoted by *Yāska*, as a *pratīka* of the fire. Here the relationship between *pratīka* and object represented by it is evidently causal. A large number of Vedic mantras make use of this sort of symbol, and it is such symbols which provide for the *ādhibhautika* interpretation of the Veda. This goes well to some extent, no doubt, but gets stuck to that extent itself proving unhelpful any further. Such a situation arises due to a radical change in the *modus operandi* or nature of the symbol concerned. Instead of remaining consistently causal, it tends to become more and more analogical and thus breaks away from the routine course leaving the reader struggling on the lines being followed erstwhile without getting the way out. It is at this juncture that arises the necessity of studying the other possible varieties of symbols based apparently on analogies but if perused in depth likely to have some or the other kind of deeper relationship with the content it seeks to symbolise. Spiritual interpretation of the Veda beyond the physical and the *Ādhidaivika* is the result of decipherment of symbols on these lines.

Lights on Vedic Symbolism Shed by the Upanisads

The foregoing discussion on *Yāska's* cognisance of Vedic symbolism has eventually converged on the relationship between *adhibhuta, adhidaiva* and *adhyātma*. It has also been seen how the idea of unity among these three levels of the reality was envisioned by Vedic seers themselves including particularly *Dīrghatamas*. This tradition was carried on by the *Brāhmaṇas* quite impressively, so much so, of course, as to have led *Yāska* to formulate so decisively his theory of Vedic interpretation concurrently on these three levels. Since the *Upaniṣads* occupy a place intermediate to the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Yāska* historically, it would be worthwhile to look into them and try to see if they provide us with any further clue in this regard.

Prima facie it has to be noted that since the problem with which we are gong to look into the *Upaniṣads* is one of the relationship between the three sorts of stuff, i.e., *ādhibhautika, ādhidaivika* and *ādhyātmika*, we should better revisit those points in this vast literature which deal particularly with the relationship between *Atman* and gods on the one hand and between gods and the physical world on the other.

From this viewpoint, the beginning of the second chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is highly interesting. It is in the form of a dialogue between *Gārgya*, a Brahmin scholar, and *Ajātaśatru*, the famous king. Once upon a time, the *Upaniṣad* narrates, *Gārgya* approached the King with the promise that he would like to instruct the latter into the secret of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The King felt delighted and observed that he would reward him with a thousand on this promise itself and not talk of what he will do after he has received the knowledge.

Being thus exalted, *Gārgya* told him that he worshipped as *Brahman* the *Puruṣa* indwelling the sun. The King retorted to him that he should not talk any more on the point as he himself worshipped the person indwelling the sun as the head and ruler of all things in the world and that one who worshipped that *Puruṣa* with so much regard for him, became the head and ruler of all beings.[1]

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1 य एवासावादित्ये पुरुष एतमेवाहं ब्रह्मोपास इति। स होवाचाजातशत्रुः
मा मैतस्मिन्संवदिष्ठा। अतिष्ठाः सर्वेषां भूतानां मूर्धा राजेति वा अहमेतमुपास इति।
स य एतमेवमुपास्तेऽतिष्ठाः सर्वेषां भूतानां मूर्धा राजा भवति। *Bṛh. Up.II.1.2.*

Gārgya then told him that he worshipped as Brahman the *Puruşa* indwelling the moon. To this also the King retorted that he should not prolong his discourse on it any longer since he himself worshipped the *Puruşa* indwelling the moon as King *Soma* and that one who worshipped him as such got fulfilled in food.[2]

Gārgya then shifted to lightning and observed that he worshipped as Brahman the *Puruşa* in the lightning. Here also the King informed him that he himself worshipped that *Puruşa* as illumination and that one who worshipped him as such was blessed with lustrous progeny.[3]

In this way *Gārgya* led the King to the *Puruşas* indwelling space, air, fire, water, directions, shadow, resound and the self one after the other and got rebuffed by the latter accordingly resulting ultimately in his surrender to him with the request that he (the King) himself should kindly instruct him (*Gārgya*) in the mystery of Brahman.

The King took him to a person fast asleep and tried to awaken him by calling him as King *Soma*, etc., but all in vain. Then he pressed his hands tightly and got him awakened. Turning to *Gārgya* after this, he explained to him how in the state of sleep one becomes completely unaware of the external world since the self functioning through some seventy two thousand nerves spread over the body in the waking state withdraws itself to the heart in the state of sleep and remains there self-contented. It is the self which working through those nerves in the waking state becomes aware of the entire universe around it including senses, heavenly bodies, earthly beings, and gods.[4]

It is not difficult to visualise that in this significant dialogue all the three orders of entities are involved, namely, the physical, the divine and the spiritual. Physical are the sun, the moon, lightning, space, air, fire, water, etc. while divine are the *Puruşas* indwelling these physical entities. The latter may be treated as divinities representing these physical entities. *Gārgya* tries to convince the King that the divine *Puruşa* or the god concerned is Brahman and fails in his venture. He, of course, has

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2 य एवासौ चन्द्रे पुरुष एतमेवाहं ब्रह्मोपास इति। मैतस्मिन् संवदिष्ठाः।
सोमो राजेति वा अहमेतमुपास इति। स य एतमेवमुपास्ते नास्यान्नं क्षीयते। *Ibid.,II.1.3.*

3 य एवासौ विद्युति पुरुष एतमेवाहं ब्रह्मोपास इति। मैतस्मिन् संवदिष्ठाः। तेजस्वीति वा अहामेतमुपास। तेजस्विनी हास्य प्रजा भवति। *Ibid., II.1.3.*

4 *Ibid., II.1.4-19.*

attained a level of understanding in this regard higher than that of the common man who is most likely to regard the sun, the moon and lightning etc. in themselves as respective divinities. Even then, however, he is rebuffed by the King and consequently has to submit before him, all his learning notwithstanding. The reason is that the King has to offer to him something which is still higher than this. And that is the spiritual knowledge. *Gārgya* also, no doubt, happens to touch upon it while identifying Brahman in the form of the *Puruşa* lying within. But what he mistakes for Brahman on this point also is probably the same as was called the divine mind, *devam manah* by *Dīrghatamas*. This is why he fails. King *Ajātaśatru*, on the other hand, leads him to the inmost principle of immortality lying within each and every individual. Thus, starting with the premise of Brahman, he ultimately reaches the *Atman* itself, suggesting thereby at the same time that Brahman, if knowable at all, can be known at its best only as the principle of immortality, eternity and infinity lying within and controlling everything.

In this scheme of things, we find a definite process of introversion from outward to inward. When the common man worships the sun, the moon, the lightning and the fire, etc., he takes them to be lying over there at respective distant places and tries to please them so that they may prove beneficial to him from where they are. This is the *Ādhibhautika* mode of belief and worship. When *Gārgya*, the learned man, on the other hand, seeks to convince the King that it is the *Puruşa* indwelling the respective physical entities which is worth worshipping as Brahman, he tries indirectly to withdraw the object of his faith back to himself from the most distant, as the sun, to closer and closer, as the moon, lightning, fire, one's reflection are, until he reaches his own self which, however, being individualistic, proves to be just an agent of the real self or *Atman*. Through the process of gradual withdrawal, he, thus, raises the status of the object of worship from the physical, *Ādhibhautika* to the *Ādhidaivika*. To state this achievement summarily, when the physical entity is discovered to be indwelt by a principle cognate to our *Devam Manah* inside our physical body, we take a jump from the *Ādhibhautika* to the *Ādhidaivika*. This obviously is attainable through devotion and digging within.

The excellence of the King's approach, on the other hand, lies in digging still deeper until he reaches the inmost Self coinciding with Brahman, the source, sustainer and dissolvent of everything. It is that common source from which, as the *Upanişad* puts it, all the senses including mind, all the

worlds, all the gods and everything else emerge like flimsy sparks emerging out of the fire. It indeed is the reality of realities. If the senses and the mind, along with what they perceive and conceive, form the reality, the Self is the reality of the reality.[5]

In this vast spectrum of the reality ranging from the physical to the spiritual, the exterior serves as the sign or symbol of the interior as it is the means of understanding of the latter. The physical world, as philosophers have been telling us since long and which is being corroborated by science quite for sometime, is not exactly the same as we perceive it; rather it must be very much different from what we see it as. Even then, however, we take things as really what they look to be and this conviction of ours is working precisely well. As a matter of fact, entities lying over there in the outside world are just signs of what they really are serving the purpose of our understanding about them. If these signs were not formed, we could not have understood anything about the world at all, just as the blind man cannot see the form and the deaf cannot hear the word. Even then, however, if they manage to feel as if they are seeing and hearing, that is due to another set of signs they come to form in their minds. Such reformed signs are definitely not representative of the actuality from the viewpoint of the man of sight and hearing, and yet they work well with those who are deficient in these respects. They must have some element of actuality somehow incorporated in them so as to be serviceable, and yet the source of that element must be the mind and by no means the senses as their service is not available to persons concerned at all. Thus there would be a lot of difference in the signs of the common man formed corresponding to the external world from those of the blind and the deaf. To formulate the point, when mind without taking help of senses comes to form representative ideas about things outside, they get reformed and tend to become symbolic.

To turn to the *Upaniṣadic* dialogue under consideration, when *Gārgya* comes to conceive of *Puruṣas* in the respective entities, such as the sun, etc., those physical entities become just dwelling places, indicators, outer appearances, signs and symbols of that higher entity supposed to be indwelling them and lying in transcendence of them. In this way, the entire *Adhibhuta* in the Vedas may be treated as symbolic of the *Adhidaiva* depending on the fact as to what degree the latter is

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5 यथाऽग्नेः क्षुद्रा विस्फुलिंगा व्युच्चरन्त्येवमेवास्मादात्मनः सर्वे प्राणाः सर्वे लोकाः सर्वे देवाः सर्वाणि भूतानि व्युच्चरन्ति। तस्योपनिषत् सत्यस्य सत्यमिति। प्रणा वै सत्यं तेषामेव सत्यम्।

Ibid., II.1.20.

independent of the former in its essence. If the *Uşas* of the seer is the dawn itself for instance, there is nothing symbolic about it. But, if it is used to present something akin to dawn in appearance but is really independent of it and higher than it cognisable not through senses but through mind, it would certainly be symbolic of that higher entity or subtler principle, no matter whatever.

To extend this formula to the position of the King, what looks as the ideal reality worth inculcating to *Gārgya*, becomes something decidedly lesser in the eye of the King. This is evident from his rejection of it outright as Brahman. These very entities, however, at last have been used by him to identify tentatively the position of *Atman* and through the latter that of Brahman. To elucidate the point, all gods along with their respective abodes are regarded by him as having their origin and sustenance in that highest principle. Thus, the gods, as well as other entities, have been used by him as indicators of that principle lying in their transcendence. From this, we may draw the obvious conclusion that in the Veda if the *Adhibhuta* be supposed to have been used as the sign or symbol of the *Adhidaiva*, the latter would have to be taken as the same *vis-à-vis* the *Adhyatma*.

The *Aitareya Upanişad* explains the relationship among these three planes of being in a formulastic way. It recounts how *Atman*, when wishing to create the world, produced first of all a set of four principles known as *Ambha, Marici, Māra* and *Āpas*. Out of these, it gave form to *Puruşa*. It made the *Puruşa* undergo a course of *tapas*. Due to the *tapas* opened out the organs of sense and action in the body of the *Puruşa*. From his mouth came out *Vāk* and from *Vāk* was born *Agni*. From his eyes was born the sun. From his ears were born the *Diks* while from his heart was born *Manas*. *Agni, Sun, Diks, Manas,* etc. were gods. After their birth, the *Upanişad* tells us further, they felt hungry and thirsty and wished to have separate abodes for them where they could pacify their hunger and thirst.

For this, a prototypal *Puruşa* was brought to them. Assuming the form of *Vāk, Agni* entered into his mouth, *Vāyu*, as *prāṇa*, entered into his nose, *Aditya* as eyesight entered into his eyes, *Diks*, as the power of hearing entered into his ears, *Candramas* as *manas* entered into his heart, so on and so forth.

Those who entered into different organs of the primeval *Puruşa* were gods while the organs, into which they entered, created through their

respective functions the respective elements in the outside world such as space, air, fire, water and earth.

The gods, the organs and the products of the functionings of those organs on the imperative of gods combined together to form the universe in which the individual as its epitomised product tended to behave as an automation complete in itself.

This tendency of the individual and, of course, of the universe as a whole, made *Ātman*, the Supreme, think how all this can work without itself, no matter howsoever automatic it be by virtue of the organs of sense and action functioning efficiently.

As the way out, it made a hole at the top of the head in addition to those already provided for in the body and entered into it through that hole and began to look around and found *Vāyu* alone there outside as well as inside. It is by virtue of this all-comprehending understanding that this epiphany of the Supreme came to be called *Indra* which, as the *Upaniṣad* explains it, is a combination of *idam* and *dr*, to see.[6]

In this *Upaniṣadic* account, we find the most profound integration of all the aspects of the reality made out in the Vedic tradition as the *Ādhibhautika, Ādhidaivika* and *Ādhyātmika*. Due to its operation from the inmost being of the individual, the *Ādhyātmika* is regarded here as the root cause of all. It is on the imperative of the *Vāyu* lying in the inmost being of the individual that mind becomes charged and operative resulting in mobilisation and co-ordination of the functions of organs of sense and action. The organs, on the other hand, are able to operate on their respective elements in the outside world on account of those elements having themselves been born of the organs of the primeval *Puruṣa*, as the *Upaniṣad* states.

Thus by virtue of its admittance of *Puruṣa* as the primeval integral reality giving birth to gods, organs of sense and action and their respective objects in the external world, the *Upaniṣad* establishes organic relationship among all the three sorts of entities, that is, the *Ādhibhautika*, the *Ādhidaivika* and the *Ādhyātmika* and provides us with the best clue for understanding their usage in the Veda.

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6 *Aitareya Up.I.1-3.*

That this cognisance of the relationship existing among the Transcendent, the gods, the organs of sense and action and the world as a whole is an established fact in the *Upaniṣads*, is evident from its recurrence in them allegorically as well as axiomatically. The story of *Umā Haimavatī* narrated in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, for instance, amounts to an expression of the same formulation. According to this story, gods at one time became proud of having defeated the *Asuras* by themselves. On this, a *Yakṣa* appeared before them and stood at some distance. Gods asked *Agni* to go ahead and inquire who the person over there was. Being thus delegated, before *Agni* could ask him who he was, the *Yakṣa* himself put the same question to *Agni*. On *Agni's* claiming that he was the god of fire and could burn anything, the *Yakṣa* put a blade of grass before him and asked him to burn it. *Agni* tried his best but could not burn it and returned crestfallen. Next was sent *Vāyu* by the gods. The same happened with him also. The *Yakṣa* put the same blade of grass before him and asked him to blow it off. *Vāyu* tried his best, failed and therefore returned ashamed. Finally, was sent *Indra*. But, as soon as he reached the spot, the *Yakṣa* disappeared and in his place emerged a beautiful lady named *Umā Haimavatī* . *Indra* inquired of her about the *Yakṣa*. She told him that the *Yakṣa* was Brahman and that it was with the support of Brahman that they were victorious over the *Asuras* and by no means on their own strength. Thus, the *Upaniṣad* tells us that this is how *Indra* was the first amongst gods to know Brahman and consequently became prominent among them. Next in this respect came *Agni* and *Vāyu*.[7]

In this story, *Indra* stands for the luminous mind, *devam manah*, while *Agni* for *vāk* and *Vāyu* for the principle of life besides their own respective divine personalities. On the physical side, *Agni* is fire while *Vāyu* is air. Being just representative, they suggest that the physical is closely related to senses, the latter to gods and the last to the Transcendent Reality. It is due to this relationship, that Brahman can be understood as manifested in the world and the latter as a manifestation of Brahman. The possibility of Brahman working behind the accomplishments of gods as also assuming the physical form like that of the *Yakṣa*, opens the way to Its representation by the supra-physical entities such as gods on the one hand and to Its symbolisation by physical entities such as fire and air on the other.

7.*Kena Up. III – IV.*

Instances of actualisation of this possibility are to be found in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where it has been observed that just as fire, though one and the same, assumes diverse forms as per the substance it gets embodied in, or air, though one and the same everywhere assumes diverse forms as per the body it is embodied in, even so *Vāyu*, the inmost Self of all, though one and the same, assumes all possible forms in the world and yet remains transcendent to it.[8] In this continuation, the *Upaniṣad* refers to the sun also as the eye of the world and as yet not getting contaminated by whatever it makes visible. On the analogy of the same, it observes that the inmost common Self of all, though pervading everything, does not get affected by the sufferings of the world, since it is also transcendent.[9] The *Upaniṣad* even goes to the extent of quoting exactly a *Rgvedic* mantra to the effect that just as *Agni* remains hidden within the pair of fire-sticks, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, and is worshipped by people keeping awake and offering oblations, even so does the Atman lying in our inmost being.[10] *Agni* as produced by rubbing the fire-sticks is obviously physical while the same as worshipped through the offering of oblations is supra-physical. *Agni* in both these forms is then used by the *Upaniṣad* as well as is recognised by it to have been used as such in the Veda as a simile for bringing out the idea of the presence of the Ultimate Reality in each and everything in the world. So is the case with the air and the sun. Their serving as similes in this respect vindicates the possibility of their use in the Veda as symbols of the same Reality also, for, as has already been stated, a large number of symbols are simply similes having reached the acme of maturity.

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8 अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपंरूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपंरूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च।।
वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपंरूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान् तरात्मा रूपंरूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च।। *Katha Up.V.9-10.*

9 सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुर्न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः।। *Ibid., V..11.*

10 अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदा गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः।
दिवे दिव ईडयो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः।।
एतद्वै तत्।। *Ibid IV.8.*

Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Vedic Interpretation

Sri Aurobindo's chance acquaintance with the Veda proved to be a remarkable incident in the history of Indian thought as well as in his own life. It is an incident of discovery of eternal life and inestimable amount of vitality from within the greatest literary monument of the world which virtually had begun to be treated as a dead mound containing completely fossilised ideas of bygone ages. It is an incident of re-enlivening what was supposed to be merely a historical record, into a perpetual psychology. To put the circumstances of this incident in Sri Aurobindo's own words":

"*My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves; and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Īḷā, Saraswatī, Saramā, representing severally three out of the four faculties of the intuitive reason, -- revelation, inspiration and intuition.*"[1]

Visualisation of the same images as Vedic seers came across thousands of years ago, led Sri Aurobindo to the possibility of recovering the entire Vedic lore through Yogic experience. It is from such experiences that accrues his interpretation of the Veda as well as, to a certain extent, his philosophical system as a whole. While on the one hand he forges out his philosophical doctrines by putting those experiences into the fire of different disciplines of knowledge, such as history, sociology, philosophy, sciences and the rest, he, on the other, develops his view of the Veda by putting those experiences to the test of the psychology of the origin and growth of idea and language.

In the Veda obviously there is an admixture of natural images and psychological terms. On the one hand, we have in it descriptions of dawn, sunrise, starry sky, night, mountains, clouds, rain, rivers, horses, cows, etc., and, on the other, its descriptions are equally well couched in such terms as *dhī, dhiṣaṇā, manīsa, ṛta, prabodha, citti, acitti, śraddhā jñāna, manma, mantra, cikitvas* and the rest. While we have gods and goddesses like *Agni, Soma, Sūrya, Uṣas,* etc., we also have a number of such deities as *Śraddhā, Manyu, Dhī, Jñāna , Bṛhaspati, Vāk, Bhāva-Vṛtta* and the like.

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1 *Sri Aurobindo, On the Veda (Pondicherry, 1956), p.42.*

As such, the question arises: which aspect of the scripture is primary and fundamentally intended? Do the seers primarily strive to describe different aspects and processes of nature in course of which they happen to use certain psychological terms and concepts? Or, conversely, do they start from the psychological and come to clothe their subtle experiences and ideas in the garb of the phenomena of nature?

Western Orientalists and their counterparts take the first alternative to represent the correct view about the Veda. They argue as follows: Since the history of mankind is progressing from completely uncivilised conditions towards civilisation, man also must be taken to be advancing from complete ignorance to knowledge. Since the rate of progress has been quite rapid during the known history, the upper end of it must have rested in complete ignorance. Since that end is represented, in certain aspects, by the Vedic age, the people of those days must have been completely ignorant of the mysteries of the universe. It would have been out of that ignorance that they would have sung in the form of the Veda.

Sri Aurobindo accepts the second alternative and argues as follows. Since the Vedic *Saṁhitās* are immediately followed by the *Upaniṣads*, the latter must not fall very far evidently are dovetailed by the *Upaniṣads*, in their content, are away from the age of the *Saṁhitās*. The *Upaniṣads*, in their content, are obviously of the spiritual or, indeed, of psychological nature. As such, if the *Upaniṣadic* seers could be so thoroughly psychological as to remain almost unsurpassed even until now, how was it possible for the Vedic seers to have remained so completely naturalistic only a few centuries earlier? Besides asking this question, Sri Aurobindo also contradicts the above view with a reference to the fact that on certain extremely complicated issues the *Upaniṣads* seek the help of the *Saṁhitās* by quoting them as the supreme authority. This clearly suggests that even the *Upaniṣadic* seers regarded the *Saṁhitās* as the reservoir of profound spiritual knowledge. This fact remains unexplained if we take the Samhitās as mere collections of shepherd-songs sung by the primitive people. In order, therefore, to account for this obvious hiatus in the history of thought, it is necessary to examine the nature of the composition of the *Saṁhitā* more thoroughly and in greater depth. In any case, it is a historical necessity that they form an apt preamble to the *Upaniṣads*.

Sri Aurobindo starts his second argument in this respect from the difficulties involved in the purely naturalistic interpretation of a mantra, hymn or, indeed, the whole of a *Saṁhitā*. It is a well known fact about

these texts that if we strive to interpret them purely on the naturalistic line, we often arrive at a meaning which is incompatible in itself. In the majority of mantras, there are words which do not admit of a naturalistic interpretation. One cannot subdue them without doing them violence of some sort or the other. But, conversely, when we approach such mantras from the psychological side, maintains Sri Aurobindo, we find such words not only revealing their meaning in themselves but also converting the naturalistic elements to their own side. Thus, in his view, the Vedic texts are explicable consistently, homogeneously and completely only by following the psychological line of interpretation and by no means the naturalistic. The latter leaves us mid-way in the same way as similes and metaphors leave us half way in the understanding of a particular poem. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"...The inconsistencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained and disappear. They exist in appearance only, because the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. That thread found, the hymns appear as logical and organic wholes and the expression, though alien in type to our modern ways of thinking and speaking, becomes, in its own style, just and precise and sins rather by economy of phrase than by excess, by over-pregnancy rather than by poverty of sense. The Veda ceases to be merely an interesting remnant of barbarism and takes rank among the most important of the world's earliest scriptures."[2]

Now, if the Vedic texts were intended for conveying a certain sublime psychological or spiritual meaning, what necessity was there behind making use of naturalistic elements in them, and that also so profusely? Either of the two things may be possible in this regard. In the first place, it is likely that they are there only for providing a metaphorical background to the spiritual teachings of the seers. Just as the ideas of a poet are better conveyed when clothed in images taken from nature, even so the thoughts of the seers might have had the possibility of being expressed better when embedded in naturalistic images. If this hypothesis is correct, the entire naturalistic exterior of the Veda, as also the corresponding rites, must be taken to be of little use other than metaphorical. Sri Aurobindo does not find himself in agreement with this view. No belief, along with the corresponding rites, can survive so long and so firmly unless it has some real grounding in history or psychology.

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2 Ibid., p.10.

Thinking on this line, Sri Aurobindo comes to the conclusion that the naturalistic exterior of the Veda also must have been intended by the seers to constitute the article of faith and practice of the people. Thus the Veda, according to him, has two aspects, the inner which is psychological, and the outer which is naturalistic. The inner is intended for the elites of the time while the outer is meant for the common people. The outer is drawn from the traditional beliefs of the semi-civilised people. It was also a matter of common practice at the time of composition of the *Saṁhitās*. The inner, on the contrary, represented the spiritual discovery of the Vedic seers themselves. Since the seers were not very large in number, and since the inner was not easy of comprehension, it remained confined only to a small circle. In view of difficulties involved in its understanding by the common people, the seers wanted to keep it secret from the superficial eye. With this end in view, they presented the inner meaning by enshrouding it in the language of the common belief which obviously was naturalistic in character. Thus, from the same texts, the initiates grasped their own deeper meaning while the common man understood his own.

This hypothesis of Sri Aurobindo's finds support from the internal and external literary evidence within the Vedic fold as well as from a similar pattern obtaining in ancient literatures of some other branches of the Indo-European culture. The crux of the internal evidence consists in the suggestions to the same effect in the *Ṛgveda* itself. In it, there are several explicit indications to the presence of two orders in the society, of those who know, and of those who do not know. Those who know are said to understand a secret meaning in the mantras. For instance, in one of the mantras occurring in the oldest portion of the *Saṁhitā*, it is said, "*He alone understands properly the thread and the art of weaving, and may tell the truths rightly who, the protector of immortality, while moving below and seeing the higher by his another sight, knows with certainty.*"[3] At another place, it is said that he alone can understand this mystery who himself is a *Kavi*. At yet another place, it is said, "*Ṛks lie in the eternal highest heaven in which sit all the gods; one who does not know that, what will he do with the Ṛks? Those who know it, sit here together.*"[4] Such statements may, indeed, be adduced in a large number.

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3 स इत् तन्तुं स वि जानात्योतुं स वक्त्वान्यृतुथा वदाति।
य ईं चिकेतदमृतस्य गोपा अवश्चरन् परो अन्येन पश्यन्। । *RV. VI.6.3.*

4 ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः ।
यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत् तद् विदुस्त इमे समासते। । *Ibid., I.164.39.*

As regards the circumstantial Vedic evidence, it is implied in the growth of two mutually distinct sorts of literature from the same *Saṁhitās*. The one of them is represented by the *Brāhmaṇas* and the other by the *Upaniṣads*. The *Brāhmaṇas* elaborate, interpret, rationalise and systematise the external aspect of the *Samhitās* while the *Upaniṣads* do the same in regard to their inner content. In fact, most of the fundamental *Upaniṣadic* doctrines are only systematised and logically developed versions of the visions of the earlier seers. It is absolutely wrong to suppose that they have come in complete independence of the *Samhitās*.

That visions of some fundamental philosophical doctrines may come to rationally less developed individuals living in a simple society, is borne out by the fact that some of the most important philosophical doctrines in the West germinated from *Orphic* and *Eleusinian* mysteries. Simplicity of civilisation is not always equivalent to lack of inner culture. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"*Nor is it a certain conclusion from the data we possess that the early Aryan cultures – supposing the Celt, Teuton, Greek and Indian to represent one common cultural region, -- were really undeveloped and barbarous. A certain pure and high simplicity in their outward life and its organisation, a certain concreteness and vivid human familiarity in their conception of and relations with the gods they worshipped, distinguish the Aryan type from the more sumptuous and materialistic Egypto-Chaldean civilisation and its solemn and occult religions. But those characteristics are not inconsistent with a high internal culture. On the contrary, indications of a great spiritual tradition meet us at many points and negate the ordinary theory. The old Celtic races certainly possessed some of the highest philosophical conceptions and they preserve stamped upon them even to the present day the results of an early mystic and intuitional development which must have been of long standing and highly evolved to have produced such enduring results. In Greece it is probable that the Hellenic type was moulded in the same way by Orphic and Eleusinian influences.*"[5]

In the same way, there is nothing impossible if the *Upaniṣadic* doctrines originated from the intuitive visions of the Vedic seers who may not have been very much advanced in rational thinking. High rational thinking is not a necessary concomitant of intuitive vision. It is illustrated by the lives of great prophets and seers of the world who were often not rationally very much advanced.

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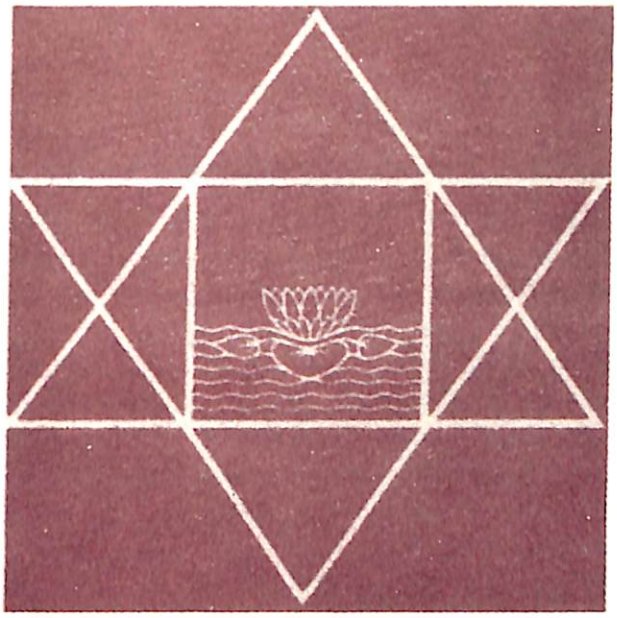
5 *Sri Aurobindo, On the Veda*, pp.31-32.

The epistemological difficulty being removed through historical evidence, there remains the linguistic problem of compressing a twofold meaning in a single word, clause or sentence, as is supposed by Sri Aurobindo. "*The theory of the psychological interpretation*", he maintains, "*depends very often on the use of a double meaning for important words – the key-words of the secret teaching.*" In such cases, more than one meaning in a single word could be possible due to the fact that each one of the majority of Sanskrit roots conveys more than one sense. For instance, the root *as* means to attain as well as to enjoy. The word *aśva*, therefore, would mean force, attainment, joy as well as horse. Similar is the case with the root *gam* which is used for spiritual as well as physical movement. Hence the word *go* means sense-organ and knowledge as well as cow and ray. It is due to the possibility of a variety of meanings being suggested by a single word that the Vedic seers could compose the mantras in such a manner that they could cater to the taste of the vulgar on the one hand and of the enlightened on the other. Accordingly, *Uṣas*, for instance, meant for the vulgar personification of the dawn coming with all her glamour when prayed for cows, horses, etc. It could also be understood by the wise as the cosmic principle of creativity embodying consciousness and force and manifesting the world out of the unmanifest. The second interpretation is easily available if we take *go* in the sense of `knowledge' or `consciousness', and *aśva* in the sense of force.

Sri Aurobindo adduces one more linguistic fact in support of his proposition. It relates to the evolution of language. It is a long-drawn controversy whether language originated with a certain number of monosyllabic or disyllabic words called roots and signifying each an action as held by *Max Muller* and his school, or with strings of voices denoting each a whole incident, as is the case with animals, as held by *Jesperson*. All this controversy apart, what is, however, evident is that the Vedic language germinated out of roots signifying action. Whether verbs came first or substantives, is discussed penetratingly in the *Nirukta* of *Yāska* with the conclusion of the priority of the former. Sri Aurobindo also marks out this feature of the Vedic language, and basing himself on it, he argues that since the Vedic substantives are nearer to their roots, they are much more universal in their meanings than when used in the later literature. Thus, for instance, the word *aśva* should mean in the Veda not only `horse' but also and more primarily `means of attainment' or `force'. Similarly the word *Vṛka* would mean in the Veda not only `wolf' but also, and more primarily `the tearer'. Thus by means of this argument, Sri Aurobindo gives the most probable rationale of the traditional belief that

the Veda is the book of universal knowledge and not merely an account of contemporary events.

Thus conceived, Sri Aurobindo's line of Vedic interpretation leads us closest to the mind of the seer. The significance of this statement can be understood by a review of the earlier attempts in this direction which mostly are entangled in the symbolic stuff which they have taken to be the real meaning and have missed the real content. The Veda, after all, is a book of spiritual knowledge rather than a manual of sacrifice or an account of bewildered primitive gaze over the changing phenomena of nature. Sacrifice is an important ingredient in its composition no doubt, but on no account does sacrifice hold the pivotal position in it. Similarly nature is there in the Veda no doubt, but by no means is the latter an account of bewilderment over the changing phenomena of nature. The crux of the Veda is rather the deep spiritual experience of the seer. Its recapturing, therefore, needs spiritual penetration as well as keen historical and psychological insight which Sri Aurobindo could afford very well. Consequently he, unlike others, instead of being entangled in the symbolic content and making feeble guesses, dived deep into the heart of the scripture unhindered and brought out certain gems of experiences and ideas which came to constitute the foundation of his philosophical edifice. The testimony of his spiritual experience and the remarkable architectonics of his system hold out the promise of still more knowledge lying undiscovered in that ancient repository. His was a pioneering work in this field which needs to be perfected by the future scholarship.



Sri Aurobindo's Contribution to the Understanding of Vedic Symbolism

1

After the *Upaniṣads* and *Yāska*, Sri Aurobindo is the most revealing light on the symbolic system used in the Veda. There is a colossal difference not only of time from the *Upaniṣads* and *Yāska* to him but also in the circumstances he came in. As regards the *Upaniṣads*, they came immediately after the Vedic *Saṁhitās* but for the intervention of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṇyakas* and in certain cases without any such intervention at all. As such, they were most intimate to the spirit of the seer. The students who came to the *Upaniṣadic* sages for higher knowledge were also mostly well versed in the Vedas or at least had great faith in the sagacity of the Vedic words. Under such circumstances, the *Upaniṣadic* sage had only to hand over to them the key to this citadel of knowledge in the form of precise hints and suggestions and the whole thing became obvious to the student already fully charged with inquisitiveness and faith. More or less, the same conditions continued to prevail coming down to the age of *Yāska* also. No doubt, a considerable course of time had passed since and consequently the Vedic words, phrases and idioms were becoming archaic to the people, but such cases were just numbered. Being given the clue, the student could understand things by himself. Extremely short and cryptic remarks on mantras made by *Yāska* as against the word-by-word explanation of *Sāyaṇa* millennia afterwards bear out the relatively convenient position in which *Yāska* had his placing in regard to the Vedic lore. Scholars of the time, no matter be they interpreters and teachers of Veda, grammarians, linguists, historians, mythologists, priests, astronomers, and the like, were equally devoted to the Veda having unflinching faith in its sagacity. If there was any note of dissent in this whole House of scholarship, that was the lone and feeble voice of *Kautsa* which happened to be silenced by *Yāska* in just one round of argumentation. If that voice reverberated in the Indian horizon, that was only centuries afterwards in the form of *Jainism* and *Buddhism* which, however, had little to do directly with textual interpretation of the Veda.

Conditions had become entirely different by the time of Sri Aurobindo. The predominantly ritualistic interpretation of *Sāyaṇa* with the involvement of stupendous scholarship in it had already reduced the Veda to the position of just a text on ritualism to be recited on sacred occasions but to be kept faithfully concealed so far as the understanding of its

meaning was concerned. It was considered most precious no doubt in regard to knowledge also, but there was no scope for human effort left any more in this respect beyond keeping it safe from the evil eye of the infidel.

This position of standstill continuing for centuries, however, came to be disturbed by the advent of the Westerners in the area. Through rigorous research they discovered that in the Veda there was neither the knowledge and wisdom believed to be there by the tradition nor the meaninglessness imputed by *Kautsa* but a world of meanings belonging to the primitive life of mankind. This fabulous discovery attracted the attention of a large number of scholars from the West perusing various disciplines such as history, culture, anthropology, religion, sociology, mythology and linguistics. With great perseverance they subjected the Veda to threadbare analysis from their respective viewpoints offering explanation for each and everything there in their own ways. The result was that each and everything in the Veda got apparently explained but in a way amounting to the conclusion that there was nothing worth the name in it except indirect portrayal of primitive life lived by the Aryans having entered the portals of India. It was like the early psychologists dissecting the body and not finding any trace of the soul there, abandoning the early Greek position and re-engaging themselves exclusively in the pursuit of psychology bereft of the psyche.

The result was that no more did the Veda remain a sacred book embodying a world of knowledge and wisdom tempting enough for anyone to go through with any deeper interest beyond the conjectures, guessings, contrivances, machinations, destitutions, and aberrations of the primitive life, save a spark of wisdom here and there which too was explicable in terms of chance occurrences.

This newly introduced viewpoint, particularly by the Westerners ruling over the country so successfully, got so much settled on the Indian psyche that except for the lone voice of *Swami Dayanand Saraswatī*, almost all of them took it as the last word on the Veda and went about using it as something axiomatic. After this, even if anyone of the Indians thought of anything new regarding the Veda, that had necessarily to be developed only under the framework provided to him anew. *B.G. Tilak's* "*Arctic Home in the Vedas*" is a glaring example of this attitude. He dissented from the propositions of *Max Muller* etc., only to take the original home of the Vedic people farther off to the Arctic region.

There is a lot of difference between a text remaining unexplained and the same explained contrary to its basic spirit. It is under this precarious condition that Sri Aurobindo happened to come to the Veda. By his time the Veda was being taught in Indian universities and colleges as a dead book, no less dead than the *Egyptian Book of the Dead,* wherein students were being taught just the grammatical structure, literal translation and explanation, if any at all, confined well within the framework prepared by *Peterson, Wilson, Griffith, Macdonell,* etc., amounting to portrayal of primitive life centring around cows, bulls, milk, horses, chariots etc., as objects of longings and Nature as the article of worship. Promptings of the heart of Sri Aurobindo, as well as the visions he had had in course of his *yogic sādhanā*, telling an entirely different tale to him regarding the Veda, obliged him to study the Veda afresh leading him to find it as laden with profound knowledge and wisdom but couched in an array of symbols hard to penetrate through ordinarily.

After propounding his method of Vedic interpretation at length, Sri Aurobindo in his *Secret of the Veda* starts his interpretation of the symbols with *Agni.* He takes *Agni* as "*the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness.*"[1] By "*Truth-consciousness*" he means the principle of *Rta* inherent in the Supreme Being and operating in the world as the agency of order. He associates this meaning with *Agni* particularly on the basis of the latter being characterised a number of times in the Veda as *kavikratuh*, having the will-power of the seer. The seer obviously stands for truth while his will-power denotes the power or consciousness of truth. Apart from this symbolic expression used for *Agni*, the latter at the very next step in the same mantra seen by *Madhucchandas*, has directly been described as *satyaḥ*, truthful and *citraśravastamaḥ*, most abundantly possessed of the word of wisdom. From the word *hotṛ* used for *Agni* in the same mantra he gets the hint of the latter's working as the power of Truth in the work.[2] Besides operating on the cosmic scale, *Agni* is recognised by the Vedic seer as indwelling the human heart also. Sri Aurobindo treats sacrifice in *Agni* as symbolical of "*continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human.*"

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1. *Sri Aurobindo, On the Veda, (Pondicherry, 1956), p.76.*
2. अग्निर्होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चित्रश्रवस्तमः । *RV.I.1.5.*

Agni has also been associated in the Veda with the household. This has generally been taken to indicate to the fire kept burning in the house of the sacrificer. Sri Aurobindo interprets it differently. On the basis of a pertinent reference in which the phrases *ṛtam bṛhat* and *svaṁ damam* have been used together and as almost equivalent to each other, he derives the obvious conclusion that the house of *Agni* must mean the vastly operative principle of *Ṛta* whose truth-consciousness *Agni* is.[3]

Next he comes to *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*. Needless to point out that while *Mitra* has been taken for granted by Orientalists as the sun itself, *Varuṇa* has been sought to be identified sometime as the god of the sky and at others as that of the ocean. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, takes their association with the sun, the sky or the ocean respectively as not actual but symbolical. In his view, while *Varuṇa* symbolises the divine power of wideness and purity, *Mitra* stands for love, joy and harmony.[4] He gets the key to this interpretation of the divinities in the very second hymn of the *Ṛgveda*. In the mantra concerned while *Mitra* has been characterised as *pūtadakṣa*, *Varuṇa* has been described as *riṣādasa*.[5] He takes *riṣādasa* to mean the "*destroyer of the enemy.*" This enemy is by no means any actual earthly being, much less any non-Aryan clan, whatever. In Sri Aurobindo's view, he represents the obstacle "*preventing the intellect from being a perfect and luminous mirror of the Truth-consciousness.*"[6] He considers this obstacle as operating in a twofold manner, firstly as the "*impurity of the discernment or discriminative faculty which leads to confusion of the Truth*" and secondly as the "*many causes or influences which interfere with the growth of the Truth by limiting its full application or by breaking up the connections and harmony of the thoughts that express it and which thus bring about poverty and falsification of its contents.*"[7] It is these obstacles, observes Sri Aurobindo, which have been conceived as *Dasyus* and *Vṛtra* etc., seeking "*to break up, to limit, to withhold and deny*" the operation of the Divine in the world. Being the prime destroyer of

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3. यजा नो मित्रावरुणा यजा देवाँ ऋतं बृहत्।
अग्ने यक्षि स्वं दमम्। । *Ibid., I.75.5.*
4 *On the Veda, p.88*
5 मित्रं हुवे पूतदक्षं वरुणं च रिशादसम्। *RV.I.2.7.*
6 *On the Veda, p.87.*
7 *Ibid.,p.87.*

these negative forces, *Varuṇa* has been conceived symbolically as vast as the ocean and the sky and not as just representative of these entities themselves actually. Complementary to him in this respect is *Mitra*. He is the power of love, joy and harmony ushering in after the removal of the obstacles.

Next he takes up the *Aśvins*. There is a controversy coming down from the time of *Yāska* himself regarding these deities whether they represent the heaven and the earth, the night and the day, two stars, two physicians, or two heroic kings. Summarising all these features together, Sri Aurobindo takes these dual divinities as representing together "*twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and engagement.*"[8] What has remained ignored in the case of these divinities so far is their divine character, taking it as something fictitiously put on them so as to conceal their physical form without noting the fact that in such cases it is the constant which is to be taken as decisive and not the variable. The *Aśvins* do look sometime as day and night, sometime as the heaven and the earth, sometime as physicians, as also sometime as heroes and kings. But all these and many more are just variable phases or fields of operation of them. To identify them with anyone of these fields of operation of them to the exclusion of the rest is hopelessly fallacious and yet the Vedic scholarship has wasted tons of paper on the problem without any possibility of consensus on it. Sri Aurobindo, through his insight into the symbolism involved, lays his hand on the real crux of the problem so far remaining ignored and restores these divinities to their real position most possibly assigned to them by the Vedic seers.

Goddess *Sarasvatī* is the next topic taken up Sri Aurobindo for his decoding. *Sarasvatī* occurs in the Veda as a river as well as a goddess. Recently the actual bed of the river has also been discovered through aerial photography. In the *Ṛgveda, Sarasvatī* as a river is said to emerge from the high Himalayas and merge in the sea. This has now been corroborated by recent researches. Now the question is what this *Sarasvatī* , as a matter of fact, was. Was she originally a goddess or merely a river? Sri Aurobindo does not deny the possibility of *Sarasvatī* having been an actual river also. But as the goddess of learning, as described in the Veda, she must not be a mere personification of any river whatsoever. Even then, however, how could the goddess of learning come

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8. *Ibid., p.94.*

to be associated with the stream of water? After raising this question, Sri Aurobindo refers to a point in the *Greek mythology* where *Muses*, the goddesses of learning, has been associated with an earthly stream of water known as *Hippocrene*. This river is said to have sprung from the hoof of the divine horse *Pegasus*. The horse smote the rock with his hoof and the waters of inspiration gushed out forming the river *Hippocrene*. Sri Aurobindo very rightly identifies *Pegasus* with the Sanskrit *pājas* meaning force, movement or footing. "*The stroke of the Horse's hoof on the rock releasing the waters of inspiration*", he observes, "*would thus become a very obvious psychological image.*"[9] Thus, he shows the obvious possibility of representation of the string of inspiration by the stream of water.

In this regard, it may be added that the word *hippos* itself has close affinity to the Sanskrit *aśva* via *aspa* and *haspa*. As such, *crene* may be taken as cognate to Sanskrit *krsta* derived from *krs*, to plough. There is a pertinent account in the *Ṛgveda* where the *Aśvins* are said to have poured down from the hoof of a particular horse one hundred pitchers filled with *surā*, stimulating drink, or alternatively mead.[10] This evidence shows close connection between the two legends and thus further confirms Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the association of the goddess of learning with the stream of water.

Identification of *Sarasvatī* with inspiration gives a definite clue to the solution of the problem of *sapta sindhava*, the land of seven rivers whose identification with Punjab along with the Western part of *Uttar Pradesh* is being held even until now as a certainty. If *Sarasvatī* can represent the string of inspiration coming down from *Ṛta*, the truth-consciousness of the Eternal, will other river-goddesses associated so closely with her remain mere rivers, asks Sri Aurobindo. *Via* a discussion on the significance of the number *seven* used for these rivers in the Veda he eventually reaches the conclusion that they represent the seven planes of being which may be determined as the *physical, vital, mental, supramental and the planes of delight, consciousness and existence*. To put it in his own words, "*the seven rivers are conscious currents corresponding to the sevenfold substance of the ocean of being which appears to us formulated in the seven worlds enumerated in the Purāṇas.*"[11]

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9 *Ibid., p.106.*
10 क्वारोतुराच्छफादश्वस्य वृष्णः शतं कुम्भां असिञ्चतं सुरायाः । *RV.I.116.7.*
11 *On the Veda, p.113.*

This proposition would naturally involve determination of the symbolic significance of the great sea into which *Sarasvatī* is said in the Veda ultimately to merge. Developing his idea *via* reference to the relevant Vedic hymns and mantras he eventually reaches the conclusion that the sea into which the Vedic rivers, including *Sarasvatī* , merge is not any physical sea, much less the earthly, but the sea of supramental consciousness forming the source and final resort of everything. If this proposition be accepted, it would automatically solve a host of problems regarding the Veda including the problem of Aryan invasion, settlement and confrontation with the so-called indigenous non-Aryans.

Next to river and water, Sri Aurobindo takes up the problem of light, darkness, dawn, etc., as involved in the understanding of the Veda. The relevant accounts are explained by *Sāyaṇa* in terms of breaking of day which was so essential for the performance of sacrifices. The Western Indologists, on the other hand, take it as a reflection of the state of mind of the newcomers of India who must naturally have been afraid of night and darkness in the alien land and therefore would have craved for the coming of the dawn and rising of the sun. Arguing on their behalf, Sri Aurobindo observes that even if we take the cow, so closely associated with the dawn, in the symbolic sense, it is quite possible to regard her as simply the symbol of the physical light. To put it in his own words:

"*Why should we not, even accepting this inevitable conclusion that the cow is an image for Light, understand it to mean simply the light of day as the language of the Veda seems to intend? Why suppose a symbol where there is only an image? Why invite the difficulty of a double figure in which "cow" means light of dawn and light of dawn is the symbol of an inner illumination? Why not take it that the Rishis were praying not for spiritual illumination, but for daylight?*"[12]

The difficulties which Sri Aurobindo feels to lie in this facile explanation is that in that case it would necessarily have to be admitted that "*the Vedic peoples sat down to the sacrifice at dawn and prayed for the light when it had already come*" and that "*it was only after they had sat for nine or for ten months that the lost light and the lost sun were recovered by the Āṅgirasa Rishis.*"[13] Moreover, he asks, in that case, "*what are we to make of the constant assertion of the discovery of the Light by the Fathers;-- Our*

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12 *Ibid., p.146.*
13 *Ibid., p.147.*

fathers found out the hidden light, by the truth in their thoughts they brought to birth the Dawn?"[14] He further points out that "*If we find such a verse in any collection of poems in any literature, we would at once give it a psychological or a spiritual sense*" and therefore suggests that "*there is no just reason for a different treatment of the Veda.*"[15]

In view of these facts, he ultimately comes to the conclusion that "*The Night is clearly the image of an inner darkness; by the coming of the Dawn the Truths are won out of the Nights.*" In regard to the Sun, he observes: "*This is the rising of the Sun which was lost in the obscurity – the sun of Truth.*"[16] In this connection, while explaining the symbolic significance of gold so often mentioned in the Veda he observes that it is "*the concrete symbol of the higher light, the gold of the Truth, and it is this treasure, not gold coin, for which the Vedic Rishis pray to the gods*"[17]

Regarding the symbolism of Dawn, he points out in the same continuation: "*Everywhere Dawn comes as a bringer of the Truth, is herself the outshining of the Truth. She is the divine Dawn and the physical dawning is only her shadow and symbol in the material universe.*"[18]

He finds support for this contention in the constant association of the Vedic Dawn with *Aditi* and *Ṛta*. *Aditi* is the mother of gods and so is said to be the Dawn, besides being directly stated as a form or power of Aditi.[19] As regards her association with *Ṛta*, it has been stated that she follows effectively the path of the Truth.[20] Negating the feasibility of the interpretation of *Ṛta* here on sacrificial and naturalistic lines as sacrifice or water in this context, Sri Aurobindo points out: "*Here neither the ritualistic nor the naturalistic sense suggested for ṛtam can at all apply; there would be no meaning in a conṣtant affirmation that Dawn follows the path of the sacrifice or follows the path of the water.*"[21]

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14 गूळ्हं ज्योतिः पितरो अन्वविन्दन्त्सत्यमन्त्रा अजनयन्नुषासम्। *RV. VII. 76. 4.*
15 *On the Veda, p.147.*
16 *Ibid., p.149.*
17 *Ibid., p.149.*
18 *Ibid., p.150.*
19 माता देवानामदितेरनीकम्। *RV.I.113.19.*
20 ऋतस्य पन्थामन्वेति साधु। *Ibid., I.124.3.*
21 *On the Veda, p.152.*

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Having thus provided us with the clue to the understanding of Vedic accounts in general as centring around the gods like *Agni, Indra, Soma, Aśvins, Mitra, Varuṇa and Bṛhaspati,* and goddesses like *Sarasvatī* and *Uṣas* as also objects like cow, horse, gold, water and light, Sri Aurobindo proceeds further to explain certain legends germane to the Vedic thought as well as involving the interaction of almost all the above mentioned agencies, forces and objects together and therefore potent enough to show the working of the meanings assigned to each one of these agencies and objects together synthetically. Most prominent among them, in Sri Aurobindo's view, is *Angiras.* As such, he deals with it at length.

The legend of *Angiras* involves the working of several gods and goddesses such as *Indra, Brhaspati, Asvins, Soma, Vāyu, Agni, Pūṣan, Uṣas* and *Sarasvatī* . The basic problem lying at the centre of the legend is the confinement of cows by some adversaries in a certain cave, particularly mountainous. The names of those who have kept confined the cows are *Vṛtra, Vala* and *Paṇi* in particular. The problem is as to what this legend refers to. Is it an actual incident? Or, is the whole account out and out symbolic?

As usual, the modern scholarship takes this legend as reflective of the ancient Indian scenario in which the non-Aryans were driven out of the plains and were contriving against the newcomers from behind hills and mountains. They in particular would steal away their cows and keep them confined in narrow valleys and caves. Rescuing of the cows from their clutches became a great problem with the new settlers particularly as they were mostly not acquainted with those regions. Out of this helplessness they naturally used to pray to their favourite gods and goddesses so as to procure their help in the task of rescuing the cows.

Sri Aurobindo, however, refutes this explanation on the ground of its incompatibility with the actual words of the seers. To quote him:

"*It is easy to suggest, as do the scholars who would read as much primitive history as possible into the Veda, that the Paṇis are the Dravidians and Vala is their chief or god. But this sense can only be upheld in isolated*

passages; in many hymns it is incompatible with the actual words of the Rishis and turns into a jumble of gaudy nonsense their images and figures."[1]

As regards the incompatibility of the explanation referred to above, Sri Aurobindo, at the first instance, observes it in the Vedic seers making use of the legend not as an event of the past but as a recurrent affair of the life of the seer involved so deeply in his quest for knowledge and wisdom. If the cows were lost and recovered prior to the composition of the mantras, the seer no more did require to get them back from the aborigines and, with that end in view, pray to the gods and goddesses to help him in the act of restoration. As against it, the fact is that *Indra*, for instance, continues to repeat the same feat again and again and constantly remains "*the seeker of cows*" and "*restorer of the stolen wealth,*" as Sri Aurobindo puts it.[2]

Moreover, had the legend been an actual event of history, and *Angirasa, Saramā, Vala, Paṇi,* etc., as actual characters of that historical event, it, in any case, ought to have been restricted to them alone and not spread over other seers and personages. But as against this expectation, the fact is that this legend gets associated with many other seers. As evidence, Sri Aurobindo refers to a mantra in the fifth *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* where seer *Kumāra Ātreya* while praying to *Agni* talks of his having been divested of his cows in the absence of the protector and makes the request for their being released by the thief so that god *Agni* may drive them back home.[3] In this account of theft and restoration of the kine, the entire role has been played by *Kumāra Ātreya* as the seer and *Agni* as the god instead of *Angiras* and *Indra* respectively.

Besides total change in the personage of the legend, the thrust of idea involved in it has also taken a different turn. This is evident from the mantras immediately preceding it. To quote them in Sri Aurobindo's translation:

"*I beheld afar in a field one shaping his weapons who was golden tusked and pure bright of hue; I give to him the Amrita (the immortal essence,*

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1 *Sri Aurobindo, On the Veda, pp.160-61.*

2 *Ibid., p.162.*

3 के मे॑ मर्यु॒कं वि यव॑न्त॒ गोभि॒र्न येषा॑ गो॒पा अर॑णश्चि॒दास।
य ई॑ जगृ॒भुरव॒ ते सृ॑जन्त्वाजा॑ति प॒श्व उप॑ नश्चिकि॒त्वान्। । *RV.V.2.5.*

Soma) in separate parts; what shall they do to me who have not Indra and have not the word? I beheld in the field as it were a happy herd ranging continuously, many, shinning; they seized them not, for he was born; even those (cows) that were old, became young again."[4]

As regards the meaning of these mantras, Sri Aurobindo observes the following:

"What, we may fairly ask, are these shinning herds, these cows who were old and became young again? Certainly they are not physical herds, nor is it any earthly field by the Yamunā or the Jhelum that is the scene of this splendid vision of the golden-tusked warrior god and the herds of the shining cattle. They are the herds either of the physical or of the divine Dawn and the language suits ill with the former interpretation; this mystical vision is surely a figure of the divine illumination. They are radiances that were stolen by the powers of darkness and are now divinely recovered not by the god of the physical fire, but by the flaming Force which was concealed in the littleness of the material existence and is now liberated into the clarities of an illumined mental action."[5]

Incidentally, it is significant to note that the account of the theft of the cows is given in these mantras not as a record of a particular event of the past in itself but as a simile to bring out metaphorically something of entirely different nature bearing, however, a telling similitude to it. This is evident from the term *yūtham na* used in the fourth mantra and *gobhir na* in the fifth meaning *'like the herd of kine'* and *'as from the cows'* respectively. These usages bear out the fact that the seer is intending to communicate in these mantras a certain secret idea bearing some sort of similitude to the event of loss or separation of cows and intense desire or aspiration for its restoration. Since the mantras are obviously addressed to *Agni*, who therefore forms the *devatā* or real subject matter of them, it is outrageous to interpolate anything from outside bearing a casual reference to the main theme by way of just analogy and declare it as the main burden of the account.

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4 हिरण्यदन्तं शुचिवर्णमारात् क्षेत्रादपश्यमायुधा मिमानम्।
ददानो अस्मा अमृतं विपृक्वत् किं मामनिन्द्राः कृणवन्ननुक्थाः।।
क्षेत्रादपश्यं सनुतश्चरन्तं सुमद्यूथं न पुरुशोभमानम्।
न ता अगृभ्नन्जनिष्ट हि षः पलिक्नीरिद्युवतयो भवन्ति।। *Ibid., V.2.3-4.*

5 *Sri Aurobindo, On the Veda, pp.162-63.*

Like *Agni, Uşas* is another deity associated with the task of rescuing the cows. Sri Aurobindo refers to a mantra seen by *Vasiṣṭha* in this regard which in his translation reads as follows:

"True with the gods who are true, great with the gods who are great, sacrificial godhead with the gods sacrificial, she breaks open the strong places, she gives of the shinning herds; the cows low towards the Dawn."[6]

In any case, involvement of the Dawn in rescuing the cows naturally transforms the nature of the cows themselves. Had any real incident of rescuing certain cows from the clutches of certain adversaries been intended to be depicted, the act might have been staged either in the night time or in the day time and least of all at the time of the dawn of the day which has naturally to do with the victory of light over darkness rather than with any event of theft getting so important as to be referred to by so many seers while praying to so many gods and goddesses including *Uşas* even.

In this regard, Sri Aurobindo further refers to mantras recounting the *Aśvins'* involvement in the act of freeing the cows. He in particular quotes a mantra addressing the *Aśvins* as *Aṅgiras* besides referring to the act of rescuing the cows. The mantra in his translation reads as follows:

"O Aṅgiras, ye two take delight by the mind and enter first in the opening of the streams of the cows."[7]

Commenting on this mantra he observes that here *"the sense is evidently the liberated, outflowing stream or sea of the light,"* rather than any incident of freeing any cows from anywhere, as was expected from the association of the name of *Aṅgiras* who is the main character in the act of rescuing the cows from the cave of the *Paṇis*.[8]

After quoting very many mantras showing the participation of *Soma, Bṛhaspati, Maruts, Pūṣā* and *Sarasvatī* , besides those referred to above, in the act of rescuing the cows, Sri Aurobindo raises the pertinent

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6 सत्या सत्येभिर्महती महद्भिर्देवी देवेभिर्यजता यजत्रैः।
रुजद् दृळ्हानि दददुस्रियाणां प्रति गाव उषसो वावशन्त।। *RV. VII. 75. 7.*

7 याभिरंगिरो मनसा निरण्यथो ऽग्रं गच्छथो विवरे गोअर्णसः।। *Ibid., I. 112. 18.*

8 *On the Veda, p. 163*

question whether there is "*a definite sense in these variations which will bind them together into a single coherent idea or is it at random that the Rishis invoke now this and now the other deity in the search and war for their lost cattle.*"[9] The answer which he offers to the problem raised by himself is highly revealing inasmuch as it suggests the real way out in the midst of apparently disconnected details of bewildering nature embodied in the Vedas. To quote him in the same continuation:

"*If we will consent to take the ideas of the Veda as a whole instead of bewildering ourselves in the play of separate detail, we shall find a very simple and sufficient answer. This matter of the lost herds is only part of a whole system of connected symbols and images. They are recovered by the sacrifice and the fiery god Agni is the flame, the power and the priest of the sacrifice by the Word, and Bṛhaspati is the father of the Word, the Maruts its singers, Saraswatī its inspiration by the Wine, and Soma is the god of the Wine and the Ashwins its seekers, finders, givers, drinkers. The herds are the herds of Light and the Light comes by the Dawn and by the sun of whom Pushan is a form. Finally, Indra is the head of all these gods, lord of the light, king of the luminous heaven called Swar, -- he is, we say, the luminous or divine Mind, into him all the gods enter and take part in his unveiling of the hidden light. We see therefore that there is a perfect appropriateness in the attribution of one and the same victory to these different deities and in Madhuchchandas' image of the gods entering into Indra for the stroke against Vala. Nothing has been done at random or in obedience to a confused fluidity of ideas. The Veda is perfect and beautiful in its coherence and its unity.*"[10]

He elucidates his viewpoint by certain pertinent instances in the Veda. Winning of cows, winning of horses, winning of light, winning of water, gold, gems, etc., with the help of as different gods and goddesses as *Indra, Soma, Bṛhaspati, Aśvins, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni,* etc., in his view, do not refer to as many different events but to different aspects of one and the same event which essentially relates intimately to adventures of the seers themselves on the spiritual plane. By way of elucidation, he refers to *Ṛgveda VI.73*, a short hymn of just three mantras addressed to *Bṛhaspati*, the Lord of mantras. As is evident from his name, he is expected to operate in the midst of mantras, their seeing, composing, recitation,

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9 *Ibid., p.164.*
10 *Ibid., pp. 164-65.*

understanding, etc. exclusively. But, as against this expectation what he is recounted as doing in this hymn is breaking the mountain, roaring aloud in the midst of the heaven and the earth, killing *Vṛtras*, defeating enemies in the battlefield, winning wealth and stalls filled with cows, and killing the enemy.[11] What is the relevance of getting done by so abstract a deity like *Bṛhaspati* the highly tangible acts which normally are attributed to *Indra*? The naturalistic interpretation fails here totally. The paradox can be resolved only by taking the entire tangibility of objects and events involved in the account as symbolic of processes taking place on the spiritual ground wherein a god like *Bṛhaspati* has the relevance of operation. If gods like *Indra, Agni, Sūrya*, etc. happen to be attributed the same feats, that is to be taken as a result of concretisation of things entirely spiritual. In this spiritual venture of the seer, the basic objective to be achieved cannot but be widening and elevation of the consciousness on universal as well as individual plane through removal of the forces of ignorance. It is quite natural, therefore, to represent these forces as those of darkness, deprivation, concealment, stagnancy, etc. getting concretised in the form of night, dragon, plunderers, etc., as against the objective of the seer assuming the symbolic form of cows, horses, water, gold, gems, light and other things of the kind.

In this process, Sri Aurobindo draws attention to another group of three mantras addressed to *Soma* which is supposed to be merely a drink squeezed from a certain creeper. The seer describes this apparent drink as to have pinned down the *Paṇi* as soon as itself born, to have turned the Dawns into good wives, to have put light in the sun, to have found out the hidden secret of immortality, to have stabilised the heaven and the earth, to have yoked the chariot with seven reins, and to have put in cows the cooked stuff by means of its strength.[12] While commenting on the failure of the scholars to have missed the profundity of the meaning embedded in these mantras, he observes:

"*It certainly seems astonishing to me that so many acute and eager minds should have read such hymns as these without realising that they are the*

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11 *RV. VI. 73. 1-3.*

12 अयं देवः सहसा जायमान इन्द्रेण युजा पणिमस्तभायत्।
अयं स्वर्म पितुरायुधानीन्दुरमुष्णादशिवस्य मायाः।।
अयमकृणोदुषसः सुपत्नीरयं सूर्ये अदधाज्ज्योतिरन्तः।
अयं त्रिधातु दिवि रोचनेषु त्रितेषु विन्ददमृतं निगूळ्हम्।।
अयं द्यावापृथिवी वि ष्कभायदयं रथमयुनक् सप्तरश्मिम्।
अयं गोषु शच्या पक्वमन्तः सोमो दाधार दशयन्त्रमुत्सम्।। *Ibid., VI. 44. 22-24.*

sacred poems of symbolists and mystics, not of Nature-worshipping barbarians or of rude Aryan invaders warring with the civilised and Vedantic Dravidians."[13]

He further brings in another feature of the legend which too cannot be accounted for in terms of the historic event. As per the latter, the objects stolen by the *Paṇis* and rescued by *Aṅgiras* with the help of *Indra* and, of course, *Saramā*, were simply cows. This central theme of the legend, however, is sure to break down if horse also gets included along with the cows. And, as a matter of fact, this really occurs in several mantras in the *Samhitā* to which Sri Aurobindo draws our attention. He refers to a mantra addressed to *Indra* where the latter has been said to have opened out the stall hiding within it horses as well as cows.[14] In another mantra seen by *Rebha Kāśyapa, Indra* again has been prayed to deliver the horse as well as the cow to the *Soma*-squeezing and liberal sacrificer and by no means to the *Paṇi.*[15] Apart from the inclusion of horse and particularly in the context of the mention of *Paṇi* here what further is difficult to understand is the probability of *Indra* delivering the cows to *Paṇis* who, as per the prevalent interpretation, were deadly opposed to *Indra* and his followers, the Aryans. If the Aryans and non-Aryans were so dead against each other, where was the probability of *Indra*, the leader of the Aryans delivering the cows and horses to the *Paṇis* in any case who represented the non-Aryans? The seer ought not to have felt such a danger at all under those circumstances. The real clue to the understanding of the hidden meaning of the account, however, besides other things, lies in the significant adjective used in common for the horse and the cow craved for by the seer. That adjective is *avyayam*. When man himself is cognised and addressed so frequently in the Veda as *martya*, mortal, by the seer, how can an actual horse or cow be imperishable in his eyes?

In view of these as well as well as several other difficulties involved in the interpretation of the legend in the above simplistic historical way, Sri Aurobindo concludes:

"*From these examples it will appear how closely the different symbols and*

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13 *On the Veda, p.167.*

14 स गोरश्वस्य वि व्रजं मन्दानः सोम्येभ्यः।
पुरं न शूर दर्षसि।। *RV. VIII.32.5.*

15 यमिन्द्र दधिषे त्वमश्वं गां भागमव्ययम्।
यजमाने सुन्वति दक्षिणावति तस्मिन् तं धेहि मा पणौ।। *Ibid., VIII.97.2.*

parables of the Veda are connected with each other and we shall therefore miss the true road of interpretation if we treat the legend of the Āṅgirasas and the Paṇis as an isolated mythus which we can interpret at our pleasure without careful regard to its setting in the general thought of the Veda and the light that that general thought casts upon the figured language in which the legend is recounted."[16]

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16 *On the Veda, p.169.*

III

Vedic symbols are to be interpreted not in isolation but in relationship to each other. This is one of the basic propositions of Sri Aurobindo as understood in course of the previous discussion. Working of this formula is to be seen in the sequel in regard to the same *Aṅgirasa* legend with a view to determining the particular sense or system of ideas it might have been intended to communicate, as per Sri Aurobindo's explanation of it.

He starts his deliberation on this legend with the cognisance of the fact that *Aṅgirasas* occur in the Veda as seers, Fathers and gods all at the same time. In *Ṛgveda V.11.6*, for instance, *Angirasas* are said to have discovered *Agni* from within the forests and at the same time *Agni* itself has been addressed as *Aṅgiras*, the son of force arising out of churning and becoming a force by itself.[1] It is significant to note that in one and the same mantra here the *Aṅgirasas* have been taken as seers on the one hand and as god *Agni* on the other.

There is yet another mantra in which they are described as the sons of heaven and the heroes of the *Asura* and as bestowing riches upon *Viśvāmitra* as well as prolonging his life.[2] Here obviously they are playing the role of gods still more clearly. Besides this, however, they have also been addressed as *pitaro manuṣyāh*, the human Fathers. Now the problem is how one and the same persons, whosoever, may be gods, seers and Fathers all at the same time.

Sri Aurobindo thinks of two possibilities in this regard. To quote him:

"*Two entirely opposite explanations can be given of the double character of these seers, divine and human. They may have been originally human sages deified by their descendants and in the apotheosis given a divine parentage and a divine function; or they may have been originally demi-*

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1 त्वामग्ने अंगिरसो गुहा हितमन्वविन्दञ्छिश्रियाणं वनेवने।
स जायसे मथ्यमानः सहो महत् त्वामाहुः सहसस्पुत्रमंगिरः।। *RV.V.11.6.*

2 इमे भोजा अंगिरसो विरूपा दिवस्पुत्रासो असुरस्य वीराः।
विश्वामित्राय ददतो मघानि सहस्रसावे प्र तिरन्त आयुः।। *Ibid., III.53.7.*

gods, powers of the Light and Flame, who became humanised as the fathers of the race and the discoverers of its wisdom."[3]

Without rejecting totally any of these possibilities, as they get ample support from the parallel *Greek mythology* where *Castor, Polydeuces* and *Helen*, though originally human beings, get deified after their death, Sri Aurobindo, however, in the case of the Veda thinks of a third possibility of symbolic concretisation of certain psychic forces sometimes as seers and at others as Fathers and gods. One of the bases behind his assumption on these lines is the liquidity of the Sanskrit language particularly as it is used in the Vedas where names usually are adjectival in character. Instances in order are *Gotama, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Bharadvāja, Vasistha, Dirghatamas, Nābhānedistha, Uśanā Kāvya,* etc., who, in Sri Aurobindo's view, *"have become types and symbols of certain spiritual experiences and victories and placed in that capacity side by side with the gods."*[4] Taking things on these lines, he, therefore, concludes: *"It is not surprising, then, that in this mystic symbolism the seven Angirasa Rishis should have become divine powers and living forces of the spiritual life without losing their traditional or historic human character."*[5]

Without getting entangled in this controversy any further, Sri Aurobindo concentrates particularly on the task of determining the nature of the role played by the *Angirasas* in the legend of recovery of the cow, sun, dawn, etc., from the darkness. In this regard, he finds them as playing their role in association with not only *Indra* but several gods, including *Agni, Bṛhaspati* and *Soma.* So far as their association with *Agni* is concerned, he finds close resemblance of their name itself with the word *Agni*, both supposedly having been derived from the common root *anj*, to anoint. He gets definite support for the proposition also in the Brahmanic statement equating *Angirasas* with *angāra*, burning coal. He refers to *Ṛgveda X.62.6* also which describes the *Angirasas* as sons of *Agni* having been born from the heaven in diverse forms and being equipped with nine rays of light and even ten and therefore shining most brilliantly amongst the gods.[6] Commenting on the content of this mantra, he observes that there is a definite symbolism involved in the account and that if taken to refer to the

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3 *On the Veda, p.182.*

4 *Ibid.,p.183.*

5 *Ibid., p.184.*

6 ये अग्नेः परि जज्ञिरे विरूपासो दिवस्परि।
नवग्वो नु दशग्वो अङ्गिरस्तमः सचा देवेषु मंहते।। *RV.X.62.6.*

sun, which is most plausible one on the physical side, it would obviously be difficult to explain their human character and seerhood of mantras. As regards the idea of identifying the most brilliant one amongst the *Angirasas* with the sun, Sri Aurobindo scoffs on this suggestion with the remark: "*We must not imagine that the Vedic poets were crude and savage intellects incapable of the obvious figure, common to all languages, which makes the physical light a figure of the mental and spiritual, of knowledge, of an inner illumination. The Veda speaks expressly of `luminous sages', dyumato viprāh and the word suri, a seer, is associated with Sūrya, the sun, by etymology and must originally have meant luminous.*"[7]

Thus, the luminosity of the *Angirasas*, if not admissible as having been physical like that of the sun or of *Agni*, must be spiritual in character symbolising knowledge or consciousness of the highest order. In support of this conclusion, Sri Aurobindo refers particularly to *Aṅgirasa's* association with *Bṛhaspati* which is quite unusual. Had *Aṅgirasa* been a mere personification or epiphany of physical light or illumination of *Agni* or *Sūrya*, he obviously had little to do with *Bṛhaspati*, the god of mantras. But contrary to this, what we actually find in the Veda is that *Bṛhaspati* also is an *Aṅgirasa*. He is not only *Aṅgirasa* but also becomes *Angirasa*, as Sri Aurobindo puts it. He is closely associated with the *Aṅgirasas* in winning the luminous cows, and splitting *Vala* to pieces. They, like *Bṛhaspati*, bring the Dawn to birth and make the lost Sun rise in the heaven.

Sri Aurobindo refers to several other instances bearing Angirasa's identification with *Bṛhaspati* or rather *Bṛhaspati's* identification with *Aṅgirasa*. One of them is *Ṛgveda VI.73.1*, where *Bṛhaspati* has been described as *Aṅgirasa* and rich in oblations, besides being one of the first-borns, guardians of *Ṛta* and piercer of the mountain.[8] He also points out to *Ṛgveda X.47.6* where *Bṛhaspati* occurs again as possessed of seven rays, wisdom of *Ṛta* and as supremely intelligent as well as an *Aṅgirasa* worthy of going close to and capable of bestowing upon mankind luminous and mighty wealth.[9] He also draws our attention to *Ṛgveda II.23.18* where again *Bṛhaspati* is said to have got an opening in the mountain due to cognisance of his glory, and as *Aṅgirasa* to have released

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7 *On the Veda, p.188.*

8 यो अद्रिभित् प्रथमजा ऋतावा बृहस्पतिराङ्गिरसो हविष्मान्। *RV. VI.73.1.*

9 प्र सप्तगुमृतधीतिं सुमेधां बृहस्पतिं मतिरच्छा जिगाति।
य आङ्गिरसो नमसोपसद्योऽस्मभ्यं चित्रं वृषणं रयिं दाः।। *Ibid., X.47.6.*

the stall of the cows, as also in association with *Indra* to have forced out the flood of the waters enclosed in darkness.[10]

On the basis of these pertinent references, Sri Aurobindo gets confirmed in his view that "*Aṅgirasa is not only an Agni-power, he is also a Bṛhaspati-power.*"[11]

Besides *Agni* and *Brhaspati, Angirasas* are closely associated with *Vāyu* and *Indra* also. As regards the Maruts, they are characterised by Sri Aurobindo as "*luminous and violent gods of the storm and lightning uniting in themselves the vehement power of Vāyu, the Wind, the Breath, the Lord of Life and the force of Agni, the Seer-Will,*" and therefore as "*seers who do the work by the knowledge, as well as battling forces who by the power of the heavenly Breath and the heavenly lightning overthrow the established things, the artificial obstructions, in which the sons of Darkness have entrenched themselves, and aid Indra to overcome Vritra and the Dasyus.*" He regards them as "*the Life-Powers that support by their nervous or vital energies the action of the thought in the attempt of the moral consciousness to grow or expand itself into the immortality of the Truth and Bliss.*"[12] Along with all these features, they have been invoked by seer *Ṛjiśvā Bhāradvāja* as follows:

"*O young and seers and powers of the sacrifice, Maruts, come uttering the word to the high place, powers increasing, rightly moving like Angiras, give joy even to that which is not illumined.*"[13]

In yet another mantra, referred to by Sri Aurobindo, while on the one hand, they are compared to horses in regard to speed, to horses yoked to the chariot in regard to uniformity in racing, to waters moving downwards, they, on the other, have been compared to the *Angirasas* in regard to assumption of diverse forms by means of *Sāman* mantras.[14]

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10 तवं श्रिये व्यजिहीत पर्वतो गवां गोत्रमुदसृजो यदंगिरः।
इन्द्रेण युजा तमसा परीवृतं बृहस्पते निरपामौब्जो अर्णवम्।। *Ibid., II.23.18.*

11 *On the Veda, p.191.*

12 *Ibid., p.194.*

13 आ युवानः कवयो यज्ञियासो मरुतो गन्त गृणतो वरस्याम्।
अचित्रं चिद्धि जिन्वथा वृधन्त इत्था नक्षन्तो नरो अंगिरस्वत्।। *RV. VI.49.11.*

14 अश्वासो न ये ज्येष्ठास आशवो दिधिषवो न रथ्यः सुदानवः।
आपो न निम्नैरुदभिर्जिगत्नवो विश्वरूपा अंगिरसो न सामभिः।। *Ibid., X.78.5.*

So is the case with *Indra*. He too has been brought so close to the *Aṅgirasas* as to be characterised as the best of them. In one of the *Rgvedic* mantras, while, on the one hand, he has been prayed to become a bull in regard to virility, a friend in regard to friendship, a possessor of *Rks* in the midst of those who possess *Rks*, the best companion of *Maruts* in regard to speed, he, on the other, is expected to become the best of the *Aṅgirasas* in regard to behaving like the *Aṅgirasas*.[15] Sri Aurobindo considers all the adjectives used for Indra here as applicable equally well to the *Aṅgirasas* also. In this respect, he refers to another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* in which *Indra* is said to have proceeded onwards as the foremost of the enlightened ones, having the bearing of friendship, as a consequence of which the mountain opened out for him, the doer of noble deeds, the interior of it; he, in association with youths, won over the mortals and while reciting mantras became Angiras forthwith.[16] Commenting on all these accounts bearing out close relationship between *Indra* and the *Aṅgirasas*, Sri Aurobindo observes:

"*This Indra who assumes all the qualities of the Angirasas is the Lord of Swar, the wide world of the Sun or the Truth, and descends to us with his two shining horses, hari, which are called in one passage sūryasya ketu, the sun's two powers of perception or of vision in knowledge, in order to war with the sons of darkness and aid the great journey...Indra must be the Power of the divine Mind born in man and there increasing by the Word and the Soma to his full divinity. This growth continues by the winning and growth of the Light till Indra reveals himself fully as the lord of all the luminous herds which he sees by the `eye of the sun', the divine Mind master of all the illumination of knowledge.*"[17]

That *Indra* is the divine mind, is borne out by the *Upaniṣads* also. According to the story of *Umā Haimavatī* recounted in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, while *Agni* represents *Vāk* and *Vāyu Prāṇa, Indra* stands for the divine mind and gets therefore intimated to Brahman through *Umā Haimavatī* .[18] According to the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, the *Atman*, after its entrance into the human body *via* the saggital suture, was seen as such

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15 सो अंगिरोभिरंगिरस्तमो भूद् वृषा वृषभिः सखिभिः सखा सन्।
ऋग्मिभिर्ऋग्मी गातुभिर्ज्येष्ठो मरुत्वान् नो भवत्विन्द्र ऊती।। *Ibid., I.100.4.*

16 अगच्छदु विप्रतमः सखीयन्त्सूदयत् सुकृते गर्ममदिः।
ससानु मर्यो युवभिर्मखस्यन्नथाभवदंगिराः सद्यो अर्चन्।। *Ibid., III.31.7.*

17 *On the Veda, p.193.*

18 *Ibid, p.193.*

for the first time by *Indra.* Indeed, it is on account of his seeing Brahman as embodied in the human personality, says the *Upaniṣad,* that *Indra* has come to be given his name *Indra* (*idam + dṛ*, this he saw).[19] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* also points out to the same status of *Indra* almost in continuation of the same state of things, though in a reverse order. It conceives of *Indra* as lying like a *puruṣa* in the right eye along with his wife in the left eye, observing the world in co-ordination with her in the state of wakefulness. They are said to meet together in the heart-space in the states of dream and dreamless sleep and subsist on the subtlest substance of food lying in the heart. His way out from the body is the nerve rising upward from the heart and going to the saggital suture. It is while moving through this nerve that he happens to see the *Atman* or Brahman.[20]

These *Upaniṣadic* accounts go perfectly in confirmation of Sri Aurobindo's above view of *Indra* in the Veda. The position of *Indra* being thus determined, it becomes relatively easier to trace the identity of the rest of the figures associated with the legend of *Angirasas,* including the latter themselves. *Uṣas* is also one of these figures. Her involvement in the legend is evident from two significant adjectives used for her. She, on the one hand, has been addressed as *angirasatamā* and on the other as

indratamā. Both these adjectives once occur in one and the same mantra while *angirasatamā* occurs once again in another mantra but that also having been seen by the same seer, namely *Vasiṣṭha.* Now the oneness of the seer in both the usages and oneness of the *devatā* for whom both the adjectives have been used, can very well be expected to serve as the key to the opening out of the lock of mystery associated with the legend.

The mantra making use of both the adjectives together reads in

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19 स एतमेव पुरुषं ब्रह्म ततमपश्यदिदमदर्शमिति। तस्मादिन्द्रो नामेदन्द्रो ह वै नाम। तमिदन्द्रं सन्तमिन्द्र इत्याचक्षते परोक्षेण। *Ait.Up.III.13-14.*

20 इन्धो ह वै नामैष योऽयं दक्षिणेऽक्षन्पुरुषः। तं वा एतमिन्धं सन्तमिन्द्र इत्याचक्षते परोक्षेण। परोक्षप्रिया इव हि देवाः प्रत्यक्षद्विषः। अथैतद्वामेऽक्षणि पुरुषरूपमेषास्य पत्नी विराट्। तयोरेष संस्तावो य एषोऽन्तर्हृदय आकाशो। अथैनयोरेतदन्नं य एषोऽन्तर्हृदये लोहितपिण्डः। अथैनयोरेतत् प्रावरणं यदेतदन्तर्हृदये जालकमिव। अथैनयोरेषा सृतिः संचरणि यैषा हृदयादूर्ध्वा नाड्युच्चरति। यथा केशः सहस्रधा भिन्न एवमस्यैता हिता नाम नाड्योऽन्तर्हृदये प्रतिष्ठिता भवन्त्येतामिर्वा एतदास्रवदास्रवति तस्मादेष प्रविविक्ताहारतर इवैव भवत्यस्माच्छरीरादात्मनः। *Brh.Up.IV.2.2-3.*

translation as the following:

"*Endowed with opulence in riches, the Dawn has become most full of Indra power and has given birth to the inspirations of knowledge for our happy going. The daughter of Heaven, the goddess, most full of Angirasahood places her riches at the disposal of doers of good works.*"[21]
Commenting on this mantra, Sri Aurobindo observes:

"*The riches in which Usha is opulent cannot be anything else than the riches of the Light and Power of the Truth; full of Indra power, the power of the divine illumined mind, she gives the inspirations of that mind (sravansi) which lead us towards the Bliss, and by the flaming radiant Angirasa-power in her she bestows and arranges her treausres for those who do aright the great work and thus move rightly on the path, ittha naksanto angirasvat (VI.49.11)*"

Thus, there is some sort of complementarity between *Indra* and *Angiras*. While *Indra* represents symbolically the illumined mind serving as the source of inspiration, *Aṅgiras* stands for the flaming radiant power of action for right and noble action which is characteristic of *Agni*. *Uṣas*, on the other hand, operates on both these planes, that is the plane of inspiration as well as that of radiant flaming action. It is on account of her dual role that she has been addressed as both *indratamā* and *angirastamā* in one and the same mantra.

This interpretation gets further confirmation from the other mantra having *angirastamā* used in it also for *Uṣas*. To quote the mantra in Sri Aurobindo's translation:

"*Dawn, heaven born, has opened up (the vital of darkness) by the Truth and she comes making manifest the vastness (mahimānam), she has drawn away the veil of harms and darkness(druhas tamah) and all that is unloved; most full of Aṅgirasa-hood she manifests the paths (of the great journey).*"[22]

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21 अभूदुषा इन्द्रतमा मघोन्यजीजनत् सुविताय श्रवांसि।
वि दिवो देवी दुहिता दधात्यंगिरस्तमा सुकृते वसूनि।। *RV. VII.79.3.*

22 व्युषा आवो दिविजा ऋतेनाविष्कृण्वाना महिमानमागात्।
अप द्रुहस्तम आवरजुष्टमंगिरस्तमा पथ्या अजीगः।। *Ibid., VII.75.1.*

To quote Sri Aurobindo's comment also on the mantra:

"Again we have the Angirasa power associated with the journey, the revelation of its paths by the removal of the darkness and the bringing of the radiances of the Dawn; the Paṇis represent the harms (druhah, hurts or those who hurt) done to man by the evil powers, the darkness is their cave; the journey is that which leads to the divine happiness and the state of immortal bliss by means of our growing wealth of light and power and knowledge."

Finally, determining the symbolic significance of the Angirasas, he observes:

"The immortal lustres of the Dawn which give birth in man to the heavenly workings and fill with them the workings of the mid-regions between earth and heaven, that is to say, the functioning of those vital planes governed by Vāyu which link our physical and pure mental being, may well be the Angirasa powers. For they too gain and maintain the truth by maintaining unhurt the divine workings. This is indeed their function, to bring the divine Dawn into mortal nature so that the visible goddess pouring out her riches may be there, at once divine and human, devi martesu manusi, the goddess human in mortals."[23]

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23 *On the Veda, p.196.*

IV

Sri Aurobindo has taken care of almost all the aspects of Vedic symbolism including seers, metres, gods and goddesses. He indeed has put forth a symbolic system which has the potentiality of explaining comprehensively and homogeneously everything in the Veda. This system was evolved in course of his intensive *yogic sādhanā* resulting on the one hand in the making of his own philosophical system known as integral Vedanta and on the other in the formulation of his view of the Veda particularly the symbolism involved in it. While the crux of his philosophical system is embodied in his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*, his theory of Vedic symbolism is formulated in his *Secret of the Veda*, and both these works were serialised in the *Ārya* concurrently during the years 1914-20. As such, there is perfect correspondence between his philosophical system and his theory of Vedic symbolism to the extent of one reflecting the other. To understand his theory of the symbolism, therefore, it is essential to have some idea of his philosophical system itself which in itself seems to have been formulated as much by his understanding of the Veda from within its symbolic system as by his own *yogic* experiences.

To put it summarily, there are mainly seven pillars on which is built up the structure of his philosophical system. These pillars are *Existence, Consciousness, Delight, Supermind, Mind, Life* and *Matter*. There is nothing hypothetical about these seven principles. Obviously they summarise the entire spectrum of reality conceivable by the human consciousness. Apart from Matter, Life and Mind which are the hard components of the being, Existence is absolutely necessary for the admittance of these components themselves. The admittance of these components including Existence itself is, again, dependent inevitably on consciousness. Consciousness, in its turn, is to be found nowhere operating just as mere awareness but as oriented to a certain end characterised necessarily by some or the other shade of Delight. Lastly, the entire spectrum of these six factors coalescing with one another has the necessary involvement of a certain system behind it evincing the working of a super intellect and serving as the basis of the human understanding of the nature of things by all means, including the commonsense, psychological, philosophical and scientific. It is this principle of system supervening the configuration of things and thoughts which Sri Aurobindo terms as Supermind.

The Supermind is the intermediary lying just in the middle of the rest of the six principles. It is flanked, as it were, by Existence, Consciousness and Delight on the one hand and by Matter, Life and Mind on the other. Its function lies in the conversion of the former three into the latter three as well as in the re-conversion of the latter into the former. It is on account of these processes of conversion and re-conversion that there is commotion involving movement, change, growth, mutilation, and transformation taking place constantly in the spectrum of the reality, actual and conceivable.

Vedic gods and goddesses, according to Sri Aurobindo, are forces, formulations or agencies of the Supermind operating in the midst of these processes of conversion and re-conversion going on all planes of being. That is why there is constant commotion in their behaviour as recounted in the Veda in the form of coming into being, expanding, fighting, striking, emerging, illuminating, consuming, protecting, guiding, rescuing, sustaining, providing, helping, etc. Although everything in the world is the result of the operation of these forces, no matter tangible to the human consciousness or not, it is their operation between the Mind and the Supermind which in particular is the object of seeing of the Vedic seers, according to Sri Aurobindo.

This operation, in his view, is oriented towards transformation of the mental into the supramental. Though the same operation is going on as per the orientation of the nature of things itself, human consciousness of the same operation as well as its own concerted striving in that direction is sure to stimulate and expedite the process of upward movement. Vedic seers, according to Sri Aurobindo, are the scions of this stimulation and expedition. It is particularly with this end in view that they contemplate on gods and goddesses, seek to propitiate them by means of prayers and sacrifices.

The effectiveness of the role of gods and goddesses in this respect emerges from the pivotal position they occupy in the spectrum of the reality ranging from the mental to the supramental. The range between the mental and the supramental is by no means small. It is almost as large as that between any other two pillars of the reality such as Matter and Life, Life and Mind. As is evident from the history of evolution, it has taken aeons to develop Life out of Matter on this earth itself. The process must have been gradual and extremely slow and yet each point in the upward movement getting materialised in a state of transformation from Matter

into Life. So must be the case with the range from Mind to Supermind. Sri Aurobindo, however, has delineated four distinct stages in the midst of the two. These he has named as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition and Overmind. Vedic gods and goddesses, in his view, are assignable to one or the other of these stages or even to the sub-section of any one of them. This view held by him concurs well with that of *Patañjali*, the author of the *Yoga-Sūtra*. The latter, while defining the role of *Īśvara* in the cosmos, describes Him as the guide of even the earliest possible group of *Yogins* or the *Yogin*, the intermediate ones being guided by their immediate predecessors. This range must include gods and goddesses also as distinct from human seers, since they too are recounted in the Veda as guiding the humans on the one hand and as being guided by their superiors on the other.[1] In this process, sometimes even human seers are used as tools or intermediaries for the transmission of the knowledge from one god to the other. The *Ṛgvedic* story of seer *Dadhyaṅ* learning the *Madhu-Vidyā* from *Indra* and imparting the same to the *Aśvins* with the horse's head is illustrative of the point involved here.

This significant role of gods and goddesses, however, has been kept couched in a thick garb of symbols not discernible to the ordinary mind. It is as thick as the Nature herself, only letting it to be discernible intermittently and that also just partly. In this respect, the whole Nature has been considered by Sri Aurobindo as symbolic of secret messages communicated by the supramental Reality to the world below, particularly the human for its elevation and re-integration with It. The worthiness of Nature in serving as the medium of the message communicated symbolically in this way arises from her inherence in the Reality in common with the message itself forming the thought-content of the symbols. This is what Sri Aurobindo means to make out when he observes as follows:

"*The forces and processes of the physical world repeat, as in a symbol, the truths of the supra-physical action which produced it. And since it is by the same forces and the same processes, one in the physical worlds and the supra-physical, that our inner life and its development are governed, the Rishis adopted the phenomena of physical Nature as just symbols for those functionings of the inner life which it was their difficult task to indicate in the concrete language of a sacred poetry that must at the same time serve for the external worship of the Gods as powers of the visible universe.*"[2]

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1 पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् । *Yoga-Sūtra, I.26.*

2 *On the Veda, pp.328-29.*

This viewpoint of Sri Aurobindo's gets beautifully illustrated in his commentary on *Ṛgveda I.170*, a short hymn of just five mantras recounting a dialogue between god *Indra* and seer *Agastya*. The latter, as explained by Sri Aurobindo, representing the highly elevated human soul is striving hard to reach the Ultimate Reality in the form of the Absolute transcending everything lower to it including even gods. This aspiration of the human soul represented at the moment by the seer *Agastya* looks to *Indra* as violative of the integral scheme of things. He, therefore, reminds the seer of the dangers lying ahead in his way. He tells him how it is almost impossible to attain to the Absolute in isolation of everything else below. The argument he puts forth in this context is revealing. It is contained in the opening mantra of the hymn. This mantra has been taken note of by *Yāska* also but just to illustrate the use of the particle *nūnam* in the Veda. As such, he explains the rest of the mantra in a casual way. Sri Aurobindo, however, delves deep into the mantra and brings out something not thought of any earlier. He considers the mantra as a cryptic statement of the nature of the Absolute by no one lesser than *Indra*, the lord of gods himself. The significance of Sri Aurobindo's discovery in regard to this mantra can better be understood by presenting his viewpoint in contrast to the literal translation of the mantra as given by *Griffith*, for instance, which is as follows:

"Naught is today, tomorrow naught. Who comprehends the mystery. We must address ourselves unto another's thought, and lost is then the hope we formed."

In contrast to it, Sri Aurobindo translates it as under:

"It is not now, nor is It tomorrow; who knoweth that which is Supreme and Wonderful? It has motion and action in the consciousness of another, but when it is approached by the thought, It vanishes."[3]

In the footnote to his translation, *Griffith* makes the following remark on the mantra:

"Indra appears to have appropriated to himself the sacrifice intended for the Maruts, who complain, accordingly, of their dependence on another's will and of their disappointed hopes."

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3 न नूनमस्ति नो श्वः कस्तद्वेद यददभुतम्।
अन्यस्य चित्तमभिसंचरेण्यमुताधीतं विनश्यति।। *RV.I.170.1.*

Yāska, on the other hand, takes the main theme of the hymn as lying in *Indra's* complaint against *Agastya* who having decided to offer the oblation to *Indra*, happens eventually to offer the same to the *Maruts*.[4] Thus there is a clear contrast noticeable between the viewpoints presented by Griffith on the one hand and *Yāska* on the other regarding the very theme of the hymn. Moreover, even if both the viewpoints, notwithstanding their mutual contradiction, were allowed to prevail, they at their best paint a picture of disappointment, disgust and betrayal on the part of the gods and the seer respectively in clear violation of the expectation from the Veda as the book of knowledge revealed to highly enlightened seers as well as that of higher ideals of life presented by gods and goddesses. If the seer can betray even gods and the latter can be so greedy of the petty offerings made by the humans, what remains to be learnt from the Veda which time and again declares divinisation of man as its cherished ideal?

All these contradictions, however, get resolved in Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the mantra and indeed the whole hymn. As is obvious from his translation given above, the mantra, instead of being a sheer lamentation made by *Indra* or by the *Maruts* on the betrayal made by the seer, is, indeed, a deeply psychological analysis accruing from *Indra*, the Illumined Mind, regarding the nature and cognisance of the Absolute by the human mind in the perspective of time. The mantra, according to him, characterises the Absolute as lying essentially beyond the process of time presenting objects and events in the perspective of its three broad divisions, i.e., the past, the present and the future. It is on account of this transcendence that It is described here as wonderful suggesting It's inexplicability. This meaning emerges from the first part of the mantra spontaneously and directly by taking everything as referring to the word *adbhutam*, the Wonderful, instead of diffusing the entire sense by forcing it to concur to the concocted tale of *Indra* lamenting over the denial of his claim on the prospective offering.

The second hemistich of the mantra, on the other hand, as explained by Sri Aurobindo, again expatiates on the nature of the cognisance of the same Reality. In his view, this part of the mantra states that though lurking around the consciousness divided between the subject and the object, the Absolute slips away from the grasp of the same consciousness the very moment it is sought to be contemplated on. It, according to him,

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4 अगस्त्य इन्द्राय हविर्निरूप्य मरुद्भ्यः संप्रदित्सांचकार। स इन्द्र एत्य परिदेवयांचक्रे। *Nir.I.5.*

thus suggests that the Absolute can be known only by transcending the state of division of the consciousness into the subject and the object through their proper fulfilment and by no means through sheer escape attempted individually. Obviously, Sri Aurobindo discovers this significant meaning of the mantra holding firmly the central idea expressed in it as well as by reducing *nūnam* and *śvaḥ* to the status of the symbols of the footsteps of Time which the Absolute transcends.

It is in this broad perspective that he is able to explain consistently the rest of the mantras also. While taking *Indra* as the Illumined Mind, he regards the *Maruts* as symbolic of the principle of Life. With this basic postulate, he explains the second mantra as a query of the principle of Life represented by the *Maruts* as also by *Agastya* as to why it is not being permitted to proceed upward towards the Absolute by itself. To read the mantra in Sri Aurobindo's translation:

"Why dost thou seek to smite us, O Indra? The Maruts are thy brothers. By them accomplish perfection; slay us not in our struggle."[5]

This query of the principle of Life symbolised by the *Maruts* on the universal scale and by *Agastya* on the individual, gets answered back by *Indra* representing the Illumined Mind in the sequel which in Sri Aurobindo's translation reads as follows:

"Why, O my brother Agastya, art thou my friend, yet settest thy thought beyond me? For, well do I know how to us thou willest not to give thy mind."[6]

This remark of *Indra's* is a warning to the individual against becoming egoistic and selfish and yet seeking to reach the Absolute which is impossible in any case. Incidentally, it is this basic idea which gets elaborated subsequently in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* in the form of *Indra* presenting hurdle before *tapasvins* in their effort to attain to the Ultimate lying beyond him. *Indra* with all the loftiness ingrained in his nature as recounted in the Veda can by no means be so mean as to be envious of petty mortals and stop their

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5 किं नॅ इन्द्र जिघांससि भ्रातॅरो मरुतॅस्तवॅ।
तेभिॅः कल्पयस्व साधुया मा नॅः सुमॅरणे वधीः।। *RV.I.170.2.*

6 किं नौ भ्रातरगस्त्य सॅरवा सन्नतिं मन्यसे।
विॅद्मा हि तॅे यथा मनोॅऽसम्यॅमिन्न दॅित्सति।। *Ibid., I.170.3*

progress upward. If the stories concerned smack of anything like this, that must be due to mishandling of them by subsequent authors. As a matter of principle conforming the main thrust of ideas embodied in the Veda, *Indra's* intervention in the efforts of the *tapasvin* concerned ought to be intended for integrating him with the totality of the reality rather than letting him proceed just individually under the impulsion of egoism and personal ambition which, as a matter of fact, have no say in regard to the Absolute. The world has emerged from the Absolute as a whole and therefore it is only as a whole that it can re-enter into It.[7] If the individual be regarded as a whole in himself and therefore comes to consider himself as entitled for this re-entry, he at least would have to wait until his entire being, comprising the physical, vital, mental and supramental, gets perfectly filled with the sense of the Absolute. Attainment of perfection at the cost of negligence of any of these components is not possible according to the Veda as understood by Sri Aurobindo. This is why *Indra* intervenes again and again in course of the *sādhanā* of the *tapasvin*, including *Viśvāmitra* and *Agastya*. Such intervention is an essential part of his duty assigned to him by *Ṛta* and by no means anything undertaken just arbitrarily. To consider such an intervention on his part as a sign of degradation in his post-Vedic character, as scholars have generally done, is rather baseless. *Indra* has never been the supreme godhead in the Veda, except only when used as a symbol of It. Normally he is a god of the mid-region. As such, he should be concerned basically with something of the intermediate level in our being. This is why Sri Aurobindo considers him as symbolic of the Illumined Mind lying intermediate to the Mind and the Supermind.

It is in this capacity that he comes in the way of *Agastya* who is in a hurry to reach the Absolute by disregarding the lower levels of his being, particularly the demand of the vital on him. As is evident from *Ṛgveda I.179*, he eventually gets persuaded by *Indra* to return home and fulfil the rest of his responsibilities concerning *artha* and *kāma* and make his advancement to the Transcendent Reality in an integrated way. In the last mantra of that hymn it has been observed in conclusion that by digging the soil by means of spade the seer came to be fulfilled in wealth and progeny as well as strength and thus in both the kinds of *puruṣārthas*, that is, *artha* and *kāma* on the one hand and *dharma* and *mokṣa* on the other, to use the post-Vedic terminology for what has been termed in

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7 ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते। *Brh.Up.V.1.1.*

the mantra as *ubhau varnau*, both the objectives.[8]

Indra's suggestion to him to this effect is evident from the next mantra in the hymn under discussion which in Sri Aurobindo's translation reads as follows:

"Let them make ready the altar, let them set Agni in blaze in front. It is there, the awakening of the consciousness to Immortality. Let us two extend for thee thy effective sacrifice."[9]

Obviously, in this mantra, *Indra* suggests to the seer to get ready the sacrificial pit and kindle the fire so that he and the seer both together in co-operation may perform the sacrifice with a view to awakening the immortal consciousness from within. It is under this persuasion that the seer takes up the spade, cultivates the field besides producing the progeny and comes to fulfilment of both the objectives of life expected of us by gods, as is stated in *Ṛgveda I.179.6* quoted above. From this, it can very well be inferred that the sacrifice suggested by *Indra* for seer *Agastya* to perform does by no means lie in just kindling fire and putting oblations into it. This sacrifice is basically the real discharging of duties obligatory on oneself not just for the sake of discharging them but for using them as stepping stones for ascension to the consciousness of immortality. Making the fire-altar ready, kindling the fire and putting oblations into it as well as digging the soil by means of spade, all these are symbolic of the practical undertakings of life obligatory on oneself not just for their accomplishment but as a means to ascending higher on the ladder of consciousness. Digging the ground for the sake of preparing the fire-altar is symbolic of strengthening oneself economically so as to serve as a firm basis for the subsistence of life and awakening of consciousness. Presence of the sacrificer's wife on the sacrificial ground and her active participation in the whole affair symbolises the necessity of fulfilment of the demands of *kāma* on oneself while offering in the kindled fire stands for one's exclusive devotion to the task of higher development in the consciousness.

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8 अगस्त्यः स्वनमानः स्वनित्रैः प्रजामपत्यं बलमिच्छमानः।
उभौ वर्णावृषिरुग्रः पुपोष सत्या देवेष्वाशिषो जगाम।। *RV.I.179.6.*

9 अरं कृण्वन्तु वेदिं समग्निमिन्धतां पुरः।
तत्रामृतस्य चेतनं यज्ञं ते तनवावहै।। *Ibid., I.170.4.*

Agastya's submission to the persuasion of *Indra* forms the burden of the last mantra of the hymn which in translation reads as follows:

"O Lord of substance over all substances of being, thou art the master in force! O Lord of Love over the powers of love, thou art the strongest to hold in status! Do thou, O Indra, agree with the Maruts, then enjoy the offerings in the ordered method of the Truth."[10]

Obviously, this is a mantra of reconciliation on behalf of *Agastya* who otherwise was not willing to care for *Indra* and offer anything to him, as is evident from the third mantra in the hymn. Now he gets himself fully prepared to offer everything to *Indra* so as to get it transformed and serve as a means in the ascension. His plea with *Indra* to agree with the *Maruts* is suggestive of the necessity of concordance between the Higher Intelligence or the Illumined Mind and the principle of Life. Discordance between the two in the make-up of the aspirant cannot permit the latter to go ahead with any tangible success. Transformation of the vital and mental both leading to their mutual concordance is the sure way to success in the awakening of the higher consciousness. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

"It is precisely by the progressive surrender of the lower being to the divine activities that the limited and egoistic consciousness of the mortal awakens to the infinite and immortal state which is its goal."[11]

Thus, we see how when explained in this way by decoding the symbolic significances of keywords and figures the hymn yields a rich harvest of ideas integrated, systematised and highly worthwhile, as against the anecdotal method adopted by earlier authorities beginning right from *Yāska* and leading us nowhere except trivialising the character of the gods as well as of the seers, as against the central thrust of ideas embedded in the Veda.

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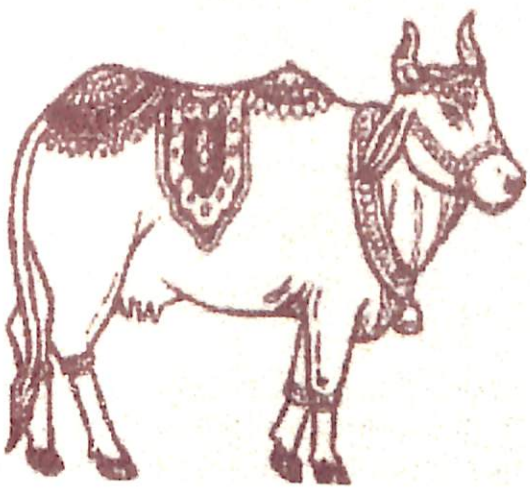
10 त्वमीशिषे वसुपते वसूनां त्वं मित्राणां मित्रपते धेष्ठः।
इन्द्र त्वं मरुद्भिः सं वदस्वाध प्राशान ऋतुथा हवींषि।। *Ibid.,I.170.5.*

11 *On the Veda, p.290.*



Cow

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Cow was one of the most commonplace spectacles of the Vedic age. She has been mentioned in thousands in the *Saṁhitās* as well as the *Upaniṣads*. Anywhere in the *Ṛgveda* we go through any set of ten mantras, we are sure to find reference to cow, as *go, dhenu* or *aghnyā* or her product in the form of her calf, bull, *ghṛta*, etc. This shows unusual preoccupation of Vedic seers with the spectacle of cow.

Now the question is whether all these references to cow are just matter-of-fact description of the actual preoccupation of the seer with their kine, grazing them, confining them to their dwelling places, milking them, rearing their calves, preparing other products out of the milk, etc., or it has been utilised to suggest to something else and higher than the bare physical spectacle.

Writers on Veda in the modern times beginning with the advent of the Western scholars in the field have normally taken for granted the first alternative emphasising it to almost total relegation of the second alternative to the background. It is reflected from their writings as if the Vedic seers were only so-called seers remaining all the time busy with their kine, managing their grazing, milking, health and growth or it is the cowherds themselves who have produced the Vedic mantras in course of their management of the kine.

This conclusion, however, gets shaken if we, instead of remaining fully contented with the writings of these scholars, take the trouble to go through the texts in the original, particularly with a view to piecing numerous images of the cow into an integrated picture so as to determine to ourselves the nature of accounts of this significant animal there. There is no denying about it that this animal in the *Saṁhitā* appears in her bare physical form also. In fact, with all her impressive grossness, she can by no means be made anyway shorn of her physicality. But while looking into the mode of her use in a particular piece of literature, one has not only to remain contented with her bare appearance but has to find out the nuances of her use in the imagery as well as the message sought to be brought home through references as well as detailed accounts.

In the Veda what we find positively is that besides some cases where cow seems to appear in her bare physical form, she occurs veritably as an object of comparison, substitute of abstract ideas and symbol of certain universal states of things or principles. The contexts where cow is used as an object of comparison relate to coming home, coming to the sacrifice, drinking *Soma*, producing mantras, dispelling darkness, etc. In one of *Bharadvāja*'s mantras, for instance, Indra is prayed to come to the sacrifice willingly in the same way as cows return home from the grazing ground in the evening.[1] Similarly, in another mantra seen by seer *Śaṁyu*, *Indra* is characterised as the lover of mantras and therefore it has been stated that the prayers are rushing to him like cows to their respective calves.[2] Here, obviously, the prayer proceeding to *Indra* gets represented figuratively by the cow rushing to her calf towards the end of the day in particular. The *Soma* juice reaching the belly of *Indra*, as the ocean, likewise, is compared to suckling cows returning home, which, again, has been characterised as the source of *Ṛta*, the eternal order.[3] Needless to point out that here cows returning to the source of the eternal order do not remain the physical cow, in the same proportion as the *Soma* juice reaching the belly of *Indra* as ocean does not remain the ordinary *Soma* juice.

Proceeding on these lines, we find cow rising immensely from her physicality and embracing a definite state of universality. In one of the mantras, for example, it is the cow which has been pointed out as the mother of *Maruts* along with *Rudra* as their father.[4] In yet another mantra, she is characterised as the mother of *Rudras*, daughter of *Vasus*, sister of *Ādityas* and the navel of immortality. In this capacity, she is described as *Aditi* and it has been pleaded that she should not be killed.[5] Obviously, when cow turns to be *Aditi*, the mother of *Ādityas* and

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1. अहेळमान उप याहि यज्ञं तुभ्य पवन्त इन्दवः सुतासः।
गावो न व्रजिन् त्स्वमोको अच्छेन्द्रा गहि प्रथमो यज्ञियानाम्।। *RV. VI.41.1.*
2. इमा उ त्वा सुतेसुते नक्षन्ते गिर्वणो गिरः।
वत्सं गावो न धेनवः।। *Ibid., VI.45.28.*
3. अच्छा समुद्रमिन्दवोऽस्तं गावो न धेनवः।
अग्मन्नृतस्य योनिमा।। *Ibid., IX.66.12.*
4. प्र ये मे बन्ध्वेषे गां वोचन्त सूरयः पृश्निं वोचन्त मातरम्।
अधा पितरमिष्मिणं रुद्रं वोचन्त शिक्वसः।। *Ibid., V.52.16.*
5. माता रुद्राणां दुहिता वसूनां स्वसादित्यानाममृतस्य नाभिः।
प्र नु वोचं चिकितुषे जनाय मा गामनागामदितिं वधिष्ट।। *Ibid., VIII.101.15.*

even beyond that as the mother of all gods, she crosses all limits of physicality and soars infinitely higher to the position of the Creatrix of the universe, the supernal status constituting the eternal source not only of all things but also of the delight sustaining the creation.

Needless to point out that cow yields milk which is one of the sweetest. If her milk be taken as symbolic of ambrosia, she naturally will come to represent the source of that ambrosia. In the Veda there is no doubt that the ultimate principle of delight has been represented in the liquid form of certain choicest edibles such as honey, *Soma* and *ghṛta*. But, at the same time, the underlying idea behind all these gross representations is that of imperishability and continuity as well as delightfulness. If the fleetingness of the worldly beings and objects is the source of misery, as the great Buddha understood it most profoundly, the sense of continuity behind the flux must obviously be the source of all possible virtues such as truth, blessedness, etc. The *amṛta* of the Vedas is the basis of this sense of continuity. *Isa* indeed is suggested to be conceived as the indweller of the universe of flux by the *Īśa Upaniṣad*.[6] The creativity of that all-creating and all-comprehending *Isa* is *Aditi*, the indivisible. All gods, including *Ādityas, Rudras* and *Vasus* as well as everything else in the universe are produced out of her. To describe cow as *Aditi*, therefore, amounts to symbolising that most fundamental principle of existence by the cow. Cow, thus, is to be treated as the symbol of that principle. It is this principle which has been characterised as the source of *Ṛta*, the eternal dynamics in the mantra quoted above at Foot Note 3. Since the eternal dynamics is based on the eternal stasis, *Ṛta* is said to have its source in a certain principle of absolute stasis. Cow in this mantra is used as a symbol of that principle of stasis. It is in this capacity alone that she can be called the common mother of *Ādityas, Rudras*, and *Vasus*.

That this role of cow is not just exaggeration but is the result of a pre-meditated cognisance of a certain principle of existence and symbolisation of it, is evident from the recurrences of this idea time and again in the Vedas. In one of the mantras seen by *Dīrghatamas*, for instance, it has been stated that cow as *Aditi* has filled her udder with milk for the sake of people treading the path of *Ṛta* and making sacrifice.[7] It is in keeping with this viewpoint that the highest footstep and, of course, the 'permanent abode of *Viṣṇu* has been characterised by the presence of cows having

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6 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्। *Īśa. Upaniṣad, 1.*

7. पीपाय धेनुरदितिर्ऋताय जनाय मित्रावरुणा हविर्दे। *RV. I.153.3.*

long horns and moving around.[8] The presence of cows there is symbolic of that state of things in its infinite potentiality for creation while the characterisation of the same place by the fountain of mead is symbolic of its potentiality for providing the joy as well as sustenance of life in the universe below.[9] The proposition gets further confirmation from a significant mantra seen by *Nābhānediṣṭha* in which the seer comes to realise the very navel of his being, which he feels as his original unitary abode and the place of the proximity of all gods together besides experiencing that he is all in all. Further he considers himself as the first-born of *Ṛta*, which the primeval cow has produced in the form of her milk as soon as getting inclined to manifestation.[10] Realising the navel or centre of one's being is equivalent to reaching the most primeval state of existence. The cow milking *Ṛta*, therefore, is obviously symbolic of the surge of creation along with the eternal laws of sustenance, out of that supreme state of things. Just as cow as an organic being produces milk out of herself spontaneously, even so the creation is surging out of that state of being organically and spontaneously.

In one of *Viśvāmitra*'s mantras there is an account of one being who, immobile himself, carries on his back six loads while cows come close to him when he assumes the role of the most productive principle of creation and sustenance. His dynamics results in the birth of the three higher worlds. Out of these three also, while two are hidden in mystery, the remaining one alone is tangible to us.[11] The immobile being is obviously the Supreme Being who, in this instance, as well as in many other instances, is conceived as a mighty bull. It is out of Him that the creation has proceeded as His progeny. In view of the colossal massivity and variety of the created beings the procreator is conceived as most abundantly fertilising, *varṣiṣṭham*. Being conceived as a bull, it was but necessary for Him to have cows as the medium of His act of procreation. In view of the diversity of the created beings, the medium of creation has been taken as many in the form of plurality of the cows. Sometimes, thisneed is fulfilled by conceiving the cow as variegated instead of being made plural. The six loads the bull is carrying without himself

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8. ता वां वास्तून्युश्मसि गमध्यै यत्र गावो भूरिशृंगा अयासः। *Ibid., I. 154.6*
9. विष्णोः पदे परमे मध्व उत्सः। *Ibid., I.154.5*
10. इयं मे नाभिरिह मे सधस्थमिमे मे देवा अयमस्मि सर्वः।
द्विजा अहं प्रथमजा ऋतस्येदं धेनुरदुहज्जायमाना।। *Ibid., X.61.19.*
11. षड् भारां एको अचरन् बिभर्त्यृतं वर्षिष्ठमुप गाव आगुः।
तिस्रो महीरुपरास्तस्थुरत्या गुहा द्वे निहिते दर्श्येका।। *Ibid., III.56.2.*

moving at all may understandably be taken as the well known six planes of being such as *bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ* and *tapaḥ,* the seventh one *satyam* being constituted by the Being himself. These six planes can conveniently be put under two groups, the higher and the lower. While the lower are the same as those indicated by the three *vyāhṛtis* pre-posed to the sacred *gāyatrī* mantra *i.e., bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ* and *svaḥ,* the higher ones are those corresponding to *mahah, janah* and *tapaḥ.* Since these three higher planes of being begin with *mahaḥ,* they are called *mahīḥ* by the seer in the mantra. That *tapaḥ* comes at the top of them is vindicated by the account of creation given in the famous *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn, according to which the creative process started with *tapas* of the Supreme Being.[12] His *tapas* itself, therefore, comes to form the penultimate plane of existence while the ultimate one, that is *satyam,* is formed by the self-existence of the Being Himself. While *satyam* is His being, *ṛtam* is what forms the *retas* or seed of the bull with which his female counterparts, the cows, are impregnated resulting in the birth of the world of multiplicity. The inscrutability of the highest two planes in the triad is vindicated by the *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn's characterisation of the plane corresponding to *janaḥ* as *rātri,* night.[13] Now if *janaḥ* is inscrutable, the plane higher than that *i.e., tapaḥ,* should be all the more so. The visibility or tangibility of *mahaḥ,* the third one in the triad, is obviously due to its expansiveness.

In the light of this explanation it is quite clear how significantly the symbol of cow was used in the Veda for giving an idea of the event of cosmic creation. This proposition gets further confirmed by another mantra, seen by *Vāmadeva* who while explaining the role of *Ṛta* as the principle of universal sustenance as well as dichotomization and diversification, observes how the cows have entered into *Ṛta* by means of *Ṛta* itself.[14] Entering of the cows into *Ṛta* by means of *Ṛta* itself is suggestive of the cows' ultimate oneness with *Ṛta* and via that with the ultimate creative being himself, *i.e.,* the bull as conceived symbolically.

If cow owing to her magnificent procreative power as well as the dignity of her calf has been used as the symbol of the Creatrix on various planes in the singular and plural both, she on account of her melodious voice produced in course of the expression of her fondness for her calf has come

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12 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसोऽध्यजायत। *Ibid., X.190.I.*

13 ततो रात्र्यजायत ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः। *Ibid., X.190.1.*

14 ऋतस्य दृळहा धरुणानि सन्ति पुरुणि वर्पुषे वर्पूंषि।
ऋतेन दीर्घमिषणन्त पृक्षं ऋतेन गावं ऋतमा विवेशुः।। *Ibid., IV.23.9.*

to be utilised as the most abundantly used symbol of the Vedic composition in the form of mantras.

For instance, seer *Vasiṣṭha* observes about *Indra* that his true and beautiful cow being filled with abundant milk milches kine and horses for the sake of the sacrificer who devotes himself to the pressing of *Soma*.[15] Incidentally, one wonders why *Griffith* has translated this mantra so as to make *Indra* himself a cow as is evident from his translation.

"To worshippers who press the juice thy goodness, Indra is a cow yielding in plenty kine and steeds."

In comparison to him, how correct *Sāyaṇa* is in his understanding of *dhenu* in this context as symbolical of the word of prayer characterised by truth, beauty and devotion to *Indra*![16] This prayer is nothing but the Vedic mantra itself emerging supposedly from *Indra* himself and therefore described as *Indra's* cow. Utterance of this prayer to *Indra* is supposed to bestow upon the devout seer several things in the same way as a milch cow gives milk profusely to one who takes care of her.

Cow indeed has closely been associated with the seeing and chanting of mantras addressed to the Divine. In one such mantra, *Indra* is regarded as a calf while the mantras addressed to him as cows. Just as cows rush to their respective calves at the end of the day, even so mantras rush to *Indra* being recited by the seer.[17]

In another mantra the seer *Sunaḥśepa* observes how his well-contemplated prayers are proceeding to *Indra* ardently like cows to their pastures.[18] Similarly in another mantra seer *Agastya* says that his mantras are reaching *Indra* like cows licking their young ones.[19] In another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* it has been stated that *Indra* is like a bull glorified and adorned by the wisdom of the seer and his cows are

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15 धेनुष्टॅ इन्द्र सूनृता यजमानाय सुन्वते।
गामश्वं पिप्युषीं दुहे।। *Ibid., VIII.14.3.*

16 हे इन्द्र तव सूनृता स्तुतिरूपा वाग् धेनुः।। *Ibid. Sāyaṇa's Commentary*

17 तं वॉ दस्ममृतीषहं वसोर्मन्दानमन्धसः।
अभि वत्सं न स्वसरेषु धेनव इन्द्रं गीर्भिर्नवामहे।। *Ibid., VIII.88.1.*

18 परॉ मे यन्ति धीतयो गावो न गव्यूतीरनु। इच्छन्तीरुरुचक्षसम्।। *Ibid. I. 25.16.*

19 उत् ने ईं मतयोऽश्वयोगाः शिशुं न गावस्तरुणं रिहन्ति। *Ibid. I.186.7.*

productive of energy.[20] In another mantra, *Indra* is regarded as the bearer of mantras and as such is equated to a cow, which the seer wants to milk.[21] In all these cases the Vedic mantras have been equated with the cow.

In furtherance of this idea of similitude between the mantra and the cow, however, there are certain references in the *Saṁhitās* where perfect equation is to be observed between the cow and the mantra. For instance, seer *Harimanta* in one of his mantras observes how wise and active seers squeeze out the immortal *Soma* juice, which is wisdom incarnate and that the regenerating prayers, as cows, go to it in the permanent original seat of *Ṛta*.[22] In this mantra obviously neither the *Soma* juice has remained any physical juice nor the cow has remained the actual animal. Being characterised as *kavi*, while the Soma juice has become the perennial wisdom, the cow has assumed the form of the mantra arising out of that wisdom and culminating eventually in its merger into the ultimate source of all including the *Ṛta* even.

The adjective *punarbhuvaḥ*, prone to be born again and again, used for mantras as well as cows in this context is highly significant. If *yathāpūrvamakalpayata* occurring in the *Aghamarṣaṇa* Hymn could serve as the source of the idea of cyclic creation and dissolution of the cosmos in the Vedic tradition, references like *punarbhuvaḥ* in this mantra must have formed the catalyst of the appearance and disappearance of the Veda in co-ordination with the state of creation and dissolution of the cosmos.

Another mantra worth quoting in this regard is seen by *Vācya Prajāpati*. In this mantra *Soma* is said to be adorned by cows by means of their milk. This milk, again in the same hemistich, is replaced by *matibhiḥ*, meaning mantras. This shows the equivalence of cow and milk both with the mantra. In the second hemistich, again the Soma juice is described as *vipra, kavi* and delightful as the heaven, *svarcanāḥ*, on account of its

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20 महाँ उग्रो वावृधे वीर्याय समाचक्रे वृषभः काव्येन।
इन्द्रो भगो वाजदा अस्य गावः प्र जायन्ते दक्षिणा अस्य पूर्वीः।। *Ibid., III.36.5.*

21 ब्रह्माणं ब्रह्मवाहसं गीर्भिः सरवायमुग्मियम्।
गां न दोहसे हुवे।। *Ibid., VI.45.7.*

22 अंशुं दुहन्ति स्तनयन्तमक्षितं कविं कवयोऽपसो मनीषिणः।
समी गावो मतयो यन्ति संयतं ऋतस्य योना सदने पुनर्भुवः।। *Ibid.,IX.72.6.*

wisdom.[23] Thus, while cows and their milk get rendered into mantra, the *Soma* juice turns eventually into *kavi* and *kāvya*, which obviously bespeaks of the symbolical usage of these objects in the text.

There is another mantra seen by *Gaya Plāta* in which the symbolic use of cow with reference to mantra is still clearer. In this mantra the seer prays to *Maruts, Indra, Varuṇa* and *Mitra* to fill with substance the mantra, which they gave to him like the cow being filled with milk.[24] Here while milk is equivalent to the substance of the mantra, the cow is equivalent to the mantra itself.

That cow in the Veda is pre-eminently symbolical of speech as such, is evident, besides others, from a mantra seen by *Nema Bhārgava*. He starts his vision of *Vāk* with the query as to where has gone the highest form of it while out of the *Vāk* used by inconscient beings one has settled down as the power of gods and four ones are milking energy in the form of milk.[25] In the immediately following mantra, it is stated that the goddess *Vāk* has been generated by gods and is being used as such by all kinds of living beings and that she as cow with all the profundity of her voice should yield for us the required energy and come to us whenever earnestly prayed to.[26]

It is evident from these mantras that it had become quite usual for the Vedic seer to talk of speech through the symbolism of cow. In this symbolic usage, several qualities of the cow were instrumental. At least two of them are quite evident from these mantras themselves. One of them is the melodiousness and profundity of the cow's voice. It is quite close to the dilated pronunciation of the sacred *Om*. Due to this closeness, perhaps, just as the word *Om* came to be regarded as the source of all words whatever, even so the cow's voice was taken to include within itself

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23 अभि त्यं गावः पयसा पयोवृधं सोमं श्रीणन्ति मतिभिः स्वर्विदम्।
धनञ्जयः पवते कृत्व्यो रसो विप्रः कविः काव्येना स्वर्चनाः।। *Ibid., IX.84.5.*

24 यां मे धियं मरुत इन्द्र देवा अददात वरुण मित्र यूयम्।
तां पीपयत पयसेव धेनुं कुविद्गिरो अधि रथे वहाथ।। *Ibid., X.64.12.*

25 यद्वाग्वदन्त्यविचेतनानि राष्ट्री देवानां निषसाद मन्द्रा ।
चतस्र ऊर्जं दुदुहे पयांसि क्व स्विदस्याः परमं जगाम।। *Ibid., VIII.100.10.*

26 देवीं वाचमजनयन्त देवास्तां विश्वरूपाः पशवो वदन्ति।
सा नो मन्द्रेषमूर्जं दुहाना धेनुर्वागस्मानुप सुष्टुतैतु।। *Ibid., VII.100.11.*

all possible varieties of voices capable of being produced by living beings. By virtue of this quality of her voice, she came to be used frequently as a significant symbol of *Vāk*. Secondly, cow's voice is closely associated with her milk yielded particularly for her calf. In fact, the cow produces her voice most frequently in the evening when after day's grazing in the pasture she becomes eager to feed her calf with the milk. Due to this association of her voice with the milk intended to be delivered to the calf, cow became symbolical particularly of that *Vāk*, which is supposed to be most fruitful. Such *Vāk*, obviously, is the Vedic, if, of course, understood in its deep meaningfulness. This last point is brought out beautifully in one of the mantras of the hymn to *jñāna* . In this mantra it has been stated that one who serves the cow of the Vedic *Vāk* well understanding it precisely and profoundly in the same sense as was intended to be communicated by the seer, he is comparable to the wrestler who does not get defeated anywhere, as against one who does not understand the meaning, is comparable to him who although keeping a cow for all practical purposes is really shorn of her since on account of not yielding any milk she is a cow just in name and appearance.[27]

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27 उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु।
अधेन्वा चरति मायया एष वाचं शुश्रुवाँ अफलामपुष्पाम्।। *Ibid.X.71.5.*

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The association of cow with *Vāk* starting from casual similitude and developing along the line of equivalence reaches its complete stage of symbolical identification and substitution at a number of places in the Veda to such an extent as to create the misunderstanding in the mind of scholars that the accounts of cow in the mantras are just matter-of-fact reporting of the then cultural scenario which was dominated by the presence of this useful animal as also by the seer's earnest desire to have as many of them as possible and be benefited by her products including milk. What a colossal blunder and gross injustice has been committed by such scholars in this as well as several other regards, can be understood by the analysis of one relevant account presented in the form of three contiguous mantras seen by *Dīrghatamas*. In the first one of these mantras, the cow has been requested to eat crops to her full content so that the seer and his associates may become fulfilled. She is further prayed to keep on grazing grass always, drinking clean water and moving around freely.[1] Obviously, this seems to be a matter-of-fact account of a certain cow lying at the disposal of the seer. Accordingly, while translating this mantra Griffith appends to his translation the remark: "*This stanza is addressed to the cow who supplies the milk for libations.*"

If so, however, how to account for the immediately following mantra in which the cow has further been said to have lowed creating waters and expanding from one-footedness to two-footedness, four-footedness, eight-footedness, nine-footedness and then ultimately becoming thousand-syllabled in the highest heaven?[2] In spite of the clear context of cow, Griffith translates *gaurī* as buffalo, which is entirely wrong and misleading. He himself seems to have been misled by the reference of water, which *gaurī* is said to have created. Since it is buffalo rather than cow which is fond of water and often dwells in water, Griffith ignores the etymology and finds easy way out in changing the meaning of the word

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1 सूयवसाद् भगवती हि भूया अथो वयं भगवन्तः स्याम।
अद्धि तृणमघ्न्ये विश्वदानीं पिब शुद्धमुदकमाचरन्ती।। *Ibid., I.164.40*

2 गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन्।। *Ibid., I. 164.41.*

itself under the predilection that what possibly would be meant here is the buffalo entering into water and beating it by her head, as is usual for this animal. What a blunder!

Griffith and his sort, however, are not wholly responsible for this aberration. It is rooted in the obscurity created by *Yāska*'s interpretation on it himself. Instead of explaining such a significant term as *takṣatī*, creating, he just substitutes it by *kurvatī*, which is quite generic in its sense. Explaining various footsteps of *gaurī*, he takes *ekapadī* as *madhyamena*, *dvipadī* as *madhyamena ca ādityena*, *catuşpadī* as *digbhiḥ*, *aṣṭāpadī as digbhiḥ ca avāntaradigbhiḥ*, *navapadīi as digbhih ca avāntaradigbhiḥ* and *sahasrākşara* as *bahūdaka*. Thus, acording to him, *gaurī* is creating water by means of air, the sun, the four directions, the eight directions and sub-directions and the sun. He takes *sahasrākşara* in the sense of *bahūdaka*, full of abundant water. When *gaurī* itself is not explained, the whole attempt at explaining the other details becomes rudderless. In this state of directionlessness in the midst of detailed mention of directions, so significant an expression as *sahasrākşara* cannot but end in *bahūdaka*.[3] As regards *Sāyaṇa*, he also does not add anything significant to *Yāska*'s explanation except taking *sahasrākşara* as *aparimitavyāptiyuktā* but again falling back to *udakavatī*, filled with water.

Although failing himself to add anything significant to *Yāska's* explanation, *Sāyaṇa* has done well to quote in his commentary the view of certain scholars, however, without mentioning their names and affiliations. According to them, as per *Sāyaṇa's* account, *gaurī* means *Brahman* in the form of *Vāk*. They take *mimāya* in the sense of the *Vāk* creating all and sundry objects in the world by way of giving them the verbal form. They regard *ekapadī* as referring to the monosyllabic *Om*. According to them, while *dvipadī* refers to verbal and nominal forms of words, *catuşpadī* denotes the fourfold classification of words such as noun, verb, preposition and conjunction. They consider *aṣṭāpadī* as referential to the cases including the vocative, *sambodhana* while

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3. गौरीः निर्मिमाय। सलिलानि तक्षती कुर्वती। एकपदी मध्यमेन। द्विपदी मध्यमेन च आदित्येन च। चतुष्पदी दिग्भिः। अष्टापदी दिग्भिः च अवान्तरदिग्भिः च। नवपदी दिग्भिः च अवान्तरदिग्भिः च आदित्येन च। सहस्राक्षरा बहूदका। परमे व्यवने। Yāska, *Nirukta XI.40*

navapadī to either the above including the adverbs or to the nine places of vocalisation in the human body, such as the navel, the heart, the throat, etc. In their view, *parame vyoman* signifies the heart-space or alternatively the basal plexus.

One does not understand why Sāyaṇa just quoted in his commentary the above viewpoint quite indifferently while the fact is that it is this explanation, which is capable of providing the rationale for the proper understanding of the next mantra also, which too, otherwise, remains all the more obscure providing the scope for Griffith and his likes to reduce this one of the most significant mantras in the *Samhitā* totally as a nightmare. He translates it as follows:

"From her descend in streams the seas of water; thereby the world's four regions have their being. Thence flows the imperishable flood, and thence the universe hath life."

No doubt the mantra in question talks of oceans as also of the directions. But if the oceans were meant in their ordinary sense, how to explain the shedding of *akṣara*, the imperishable into the *kṣara*, the perishable, which obviously is a contradiction in terms. As a matter of fact, *Gaurī* of this mantra is neither a buffalo nor do streams of water in any physical sense flow from her. She is positively the cow in the symbolic sense representing the ultimate Creatrix of the world. This gets further confirmed by one of *Viśvāmitra*'s mantras in which while elaborating on the mighty vision of absolute oneness of the ultimate reality it has been observed at the outset of the hymn that when the most primeval dawns came to shine, the great *Akṣara* came to evolve itself in the original abode of the cow and that it is only as a consequence of this event that began the role of the gods in the cosmic creation and that all this bears out the ultimate oneness of the divinity of gods.[4] It is from the *Akṣara* of this order that the oceans and the directions are said in *Dīrghatamas'* mantra to be born. Interestingly enough this momentous trans-cosmic event is associated according to both the seers, *Viśvāmitra* and *Dīrghatamas*, with the abode or being of the cow. As such, the cow in question, therefore, has to be taken as symbolic of the ultimate Creatrix, which is responsible for making the Supreme Imperishable Being undergo the antithetical process of perishability.

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4 उ॒षसः॑ पू॒र्वा अ॒ध॒ यद् व्यू॒षुर्म॒हद् वि जज्ञे अ॒क्षरं॑ प॒दे गोः।
व्र॒ता दे॒वाना॒मुप॒ नु प्र॒भूष॑न् म॒हद् दे॒वाना॑मसुर॒त्वमेक॑म्।। *RV. III. 55.1*

Association of *akşara* with cow, as is vindicated by *Viśvāmitra's* mantra quoted above also, cannot be explained without taking this cow as symbolical of *Vāk* by virtue of her prolonged lowing of the monosyllabic *Om*. Needless to point out that *akşara* is the irreducible most fundamental constituent of language. Just as atoms are the ultimate building blocks of the universe according to the *Vaiśeşikas*, even so *akşara* is the ultimate building block of language, which is the co-ordinate of the reality. As per the philosophy of the Vedic seers, what is realised as ultimate on the microcosmic scale must prove ultimate on the macrocosmic scale as well. In fact, the entire approach of these seers to knowledge is based on this understanding. This is why *akşara* of the syllabic variety has been considered as identical to *Akşara* denoting the supra-cosmic reality. Indeed, it is this vision of the Vedic seer, which subsequently develops into the philosophy of *Śabda -Brahman*.

Thus *Gaurī* of *Dīrghatamas* is, indeed, the *Śabda -Brahman* itself given the feminine form of cow so as to bring out its role of creativity both on the side of *Vāk* as well as the reality. If on the side of the reality she gives rise to oceans and directions out of herself and thus creates the basis of universal existence, she on the side of *Vāk* assumes the fourfold form of linguistic expression dilated upon by *Dīrghatamas* himself almost in the same continuation through the account of four steps of *Vāk* known only to those who understand things in their ultimate essence, three of which lying hidden in mystery while the fourth one being used by humans.[5] It is significant to note that dealing with the same situation of the imperishable reality giving rise to the perishable world, while *Viśvāmitra* refers to the footstep of cow, *Dīrghatamas* makes use of the expression of footsteps of *Vāk*. It automatically proves the essential equivalence of the meaning denoted by these so dissimilar expressions and therefore the symbolic nature of cow as also the particular idea symbolised by her.

It is interesting to note in this context how the Upanişadic story of *Satyakāma's* education by sage *Haridrumata* has a direct bearing on this highly symbolic mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas*. To remind ourselves of the main points of the story, *Satyakāma*, an initiate in Vedic

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5 चत्वारि वाक्परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति।। *Ibid., I.164.45*

education, was given the charge of four hundred cows by the teacher and was asked to take them to the pasture land, take due care of them and not return to the school until they became one thousand. *Satyakāma* does accordingly and when the cows reach the required number of one thousand, the bull from amongst the cows happens to initiate *Satyakāma* in the mystery of *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality. Supposing *Brahman* as four-footed, he proposes to teach *Satyakāma* in one aspect of *Brahman* called *prakāśavān* and explains it as comprising the four directions, i.e., east, west, north and south as different aspects of that phase of *Brahman*. After teaching so much, the bull directs *Satyakāma* to proceed on his return journey where *Agni* would teach him next into the mystery of *Brahman*. When he stops in the evening and kindles the fire, *Agni* begins to teach him how the earth, the intermediate space, the heaven and the ocean form different aspects of one leg of *Brahman* known as *anantavān*. Having taught him next in this regard the swan in its turn teaches him how *Agni, Sūrya, Candra,* and *Vidyut* form different aspects of the third leg of Brahman known as *jyotişmān*. In course of this, the bird *madgu* finally teaches him how breath, eye, ear and mind form the fourth leg of *Brahman* known as *āyatanavān*. This teaching by the four agencies proves so effective that when *Satyakāma* reaches in the presence of the teacher, the latter finds him as already fully enlightened leaving little scope for any further teaching except formalising what he already had learnt.[6]

When we go through this account *vis-a-vis* the details embodied in the mantra, we have no difficulty in correlating the facts mentioned in them. In the first place, in the mantra, as well as in the story, it is the cow which forms the basis of the creation as well as learning about the mystery of creation. This suggests that the mystery of creation can be got unveiled by taking recourse to the fundamental principle of creation itself, as knowledge is closely associated with the object of knowledge.

Secondly, if in the story what *Satyakāma* is handed over are cows numbering four hundred, in the mantra also while creating the waters *Gaurī* at one stage shows herself as four-footed developing out of one-footedness and two-footedness successively. Four, of course, is a square number capable of serving as the basis of reaching perfection, which is symbolised by thousand. Accordingly, if in the story the four hundred

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6 *Chāndogya Upanişad, IV.4-9.*

cows are to grow into thousand, in the mantra *Gaurī* at the state of perfection grows into thousand syllabled. Thus, if the four hundred cows correspond to the four-syllabic *Gaurī* or *Vāk*, the one thousand cows correspond to the thousand-syllabic one.

Thirdly, if in the story it is when the cows grow into one thousand that the bull emerges out of them and enlightens *Satyakāma* in the knowledge of *Brahman* partly at least, and further shows the definite way to fuller enlightenment, in the mantra also it is equally well understood that when *Vāk* would become thousand-syllabled it would automatically make one enlightened in the whole mystery of creation out of the Ultimate Being whose Creatrix *Gaurī* is and which itself is directly mentioned by the seer almost in the same continuation just after a few mantras as *ekam sat*.[7]

Finally, if the bull of the story mentions the four directions i.e., the east, the west, the north and the south as constituting one of the four legs of *Brahman*, the mantra mentions the same together by the term *pradiśaścatasrah*, the four directions leaving only *samudra* to be mentioned further by *Agni* in the story. In fact, as the earth, the intermediate space, the heaven, *Agni, Sūrya, Ćandra*, and *Vidyut* all are creations out of space, indeed in co-ordination with time, what the agencies other than the bull taught to *Satyakāma* is simply an elaboration on the bull's teachings. If this be admitted, it can confidently be said that it is the bull who is the real teacher of *Satyakāma*. And there is no misunderstanding about it that the bull is just a counterpart of the *Gaurī* of the *Rgvedic* mantra. He, indeed, is the same bull who in *Vāmadeva's* famous mantra occurs as four-horned, three-footed, two-headed, seven-handed, threefold bound and as bellowing constantly from within the mortals having entered within them.[8] The four horns of this bull may tentatively be taken to have been rendered into the four feet in the *Upaniṣad*, representing the four forms of manifestation of It in the world, i.e., spatial, temporal, physical and psychic. By virtue of lying inherent in the psychic being of the mortals, the bull is capable of emerging from

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7. इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान्।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्नि यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः।। *RV.I. 164.46*

8. चत्वारि शृंगा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य।
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति महो देवो मर्त्यां आ विवेश।। *Ibid., IV 58.3*

within and teaching them about the Reality along with all its manifestations. This is the real secret of the process of learning and knowing, all other things involved in the process being just accessories to this final objective, just as attainment to the state of thousand-syllabled *Vāk* is the final objective while the way to attaining to this objective lies in traversing along the path of monosyllabic, disyllabic, quadri-syllabic, eight-syllabic and nine-syllabic words. This psychology of learning has symbolically been brought out in the story of *Satyakāma Jābāla* through cows used as symbols.

Ghrta

Ghṛta is clarified butter. Since cow was in abundance in the Vedic age, there was also abundance of *ghṛta*. As such, it was a matter of great use in life. It was used in sacrifices as well as was an important ingredient of food. Consequently it has found a significant place in the Vedas. In the *Ṛgveda* itself *ghṛta* occurs more than hundred times used symbolically as well as literally. As the Vedic seer was in the quest of the essence of things, he did not permit the product of milk stop at the stage of butter. He saw to it that the butter could be made rather durable. With this end in view, he clarified it and thus could produce *ghṛta*, which is durable and can assume two forms, solid and liquid without losing anything in essence. It is highly inflammable and good-smelling. It is also highly tasteful as well as energising. Since the Vedic people offered to gods and goddesses through fire what was considered best and most desirable as the food stuff, they made abundant use of *ghṛta*, which incidentally proved highly inflammable and good-smelling. On account of these qualities of it, *ghṛta* became an important ingredient of sacrifice, of course, no less important than Soma itself. A sacrifice, indeed, can be performed without *Soma*, but never without *ghṛta*.

That *ghṛta* was used during the Vedic period as well as throughout the whole history of India as a delicious and extremely nourishing food content is evident from the heavenly damsel *Urvaśī's* statement in the *Ṛgveda* that she took a lump of *ghṛta* only once a day and on the strength of it moved around fully contented even after four years of departure from *Pururavas*.[1]

Any literary creation, however, and particularly one of the qualities of the Veda cannot gain in significance and the consequent endurablity by just matter-of-fact account of material things whatever. It makes use of material things no doubt but in a deeper figurative sense. It is such figurative usages which breed symbolism. When any material object is used to signify something beyond its own range, it becomes figurative and when the figurative usage matures into the reflective usage of the object in the broader sense, it becomes symbolic.

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1. यद्धिरुपाचरं मर्त्येष्ववसं रात्रीः शरदश्चतस्रः।
घृतस्य स्तोकं सकृदह्न आश्नां तावदेवेदं तातृपाणा चरामि।। *Ṛgveda X.95.16.*

As regards the figurative usage, we find quite a few of them in the *Ṛgveda*. By way of bringing out the fascination of the appearance of *Agni*, it has been observed that it is something most variegated and attractive as well as beneficial. In order to bring out all these qualities concretely together, the seer compares the look of *Agni* with the *ghṛta* prepared out of the milk of cow and clarified in fire.[2] Needless to point out that the *ghṛta* prepared out of the cow's milk is slightly yellowish as compared to that prepared out of buffalo's milk, which is white. The resemblance shows the minuteness of the seer's observation. Seer *Vāmadeva* repeats the same simile a littler later when he observes that *Agni* in appearance is akin to perfectly clarified *ghṛta*, shining and taintless, as well as is gold.[3] Thus, in the seer's view, *Agni*, gold and *ghṛta* are kindred in appearance and basics in the total scheme of things.

As such, *ghṛta* comes to form the ideal of the appearance of gods and their costumes. *Apām Napāt*, for instance, along with waters in the form of smiling beautiful ladies around him, has been described as clad in attire akin to *ghṛta* in appearance.[4] *Viśvāmitra* also, like *Gṛtsamada*, views *Agni* as clad in *ghṛta*.[5] So is the case with *Vāmadeva* with respect to sacrifices, however. He describes them as *ghṛtanirṇijah*, adorned in *ghṛta*.[6] *Vasiṣṭha* also observes how *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* have been given the attire of *ghṛta* by seers.[7] As is evident from the literal meaning of the word *devatā* , god, it is but natural for the latter to be shining. It is quite in keeping with this feature of gods in general that they are envisaged as robed in *ghṛta* signifying thereby their lustrous appearance.

Obviously, in such usages the word *ghṛta* does not remain confined to its literal sense. When a particular deity is described as *ghṛtaṇirnik*, the word *ghṛta* in this usage comes to signify particularly lustre rather than the substance called *ghṛta*. Indeed when a particular word or object is used to point to a particular feature of itself alone instead of the whole of it, it becomes symbolic in its usage. While being used as such, no more

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2 अस्य श्रेष्ठो सुभगस्य संदृग् देवस्य चित्रतमा मर्त्येषु।
शुचिं घृतं न तप्तमघ्न्यायाः स्पार्हा देवस्य मंहनेव धेनोः।। *Ibid., IV.1.6.*

3 घृतं न पूतं तनूररेपाः शुचि हिरण्यम्। *Ibid., IV.10.6.*

4 तमस्मेरा युवतयो युवानं मर्मृज्यमानाः परि यन्त्यापः ।
स शुक्रेभिः शिक्वभी रेवदस्मे दीदायानिध्मो घृतनिर्णिगप्सु।। *Ibid., II.35.4.*

5 पृथुपाजा अमर्त्यो घृतनिर्णिक् स्वाहुतः। अग्निर्यज्ञस्य हव्यवाट्।। *Ibid., III. 27.5.*

6 ते वां हृदे मनसे सन्तु यज्ञा जुष्टासो अद्य घृतनिर्णिजो गुः। *Ibid., IV.37.2.*

7. दिवि क्षयन्ता रजसः पृथिव्यां प्र वां घृतस्य निर्णिजो ददीरन्। *Ibid., VII .64.1.*

does it remain itself. It comes to signify something quite different and detached from what it literally stands for. Here *ghṛta,* for instance, is meant only to signify the lustrousness of the appearance of the divinity concerned.

Interestingly enough, the word *pratīka,* used subsequently to signify symbol as such, occurs several times in the *Ṛgveda* particularly in association with *ghṛta.* In all such usages, *ghṛta* forms the first member of the compound while the second one is formed either by *Agni* or by *Uṣas.* In one such mantra, for instance, *Agni* is described as *ghṛta-pratīka* as also *ṛtasya dhursad,* sitting at the crest of *Ṛta,* the universal order or sacrifice.[8] Here while *ghṛta* stands for lustrousness, *pratīka* signifies resemblance to. Thus *Agni* is called *ghṛtapratīka* on account of its resemblance to *ghṛta* in lustrousness. Since the lustre of *Agni,* to a great extent, is due to *ghṛta* itself, one may be tempted to see some sort of causal relationship between the symbol and the object symbolised here. That also is possible to some extent inasmuch as it is quite possible for the symbol to resemble the object symbolised on account of its some sort of causal relationship with what it is used to symbolise. There are, however, cases where such relationship has little to do. One such usage is the description of *Uṣas* as *ghṛtapratīka.*[9] Lustre of *Uṣas* is akin to that of *ghṛta.* It is why *ghṛta* can very well be taken to give an idea of *Uṣas.* This possibility creates the scope for the use of *ghṛta* to symbolise *Uṣas.*

Incidentally, the word *pratīka* has been taken sometimes in the *Brāhmaṇas* in the sense of mouth.[10] *Pratīka* signifies mouth by virtue of its power of consumption. This is what happens in the process of symbolisation also. Symbolisation entails *de facto* consumption of the object symbolised by the symbol. In the case under combination, for instance, when *Uṣas* is described as *ghṛtapratīka, ghṛta* takes the whole of *Uṣas* in its ambit and comes to the fore to represent her in all her lustrousness. In such cases, dimensional proportion between the symbol and the object symbolised stands rather discounted. It is in this discounting of the proportion, of course, that lies the utility of the symbol to a great extent. The symbolic usage creates ease in the understanding of the unfamiliar by the familiar, the unmanageable by the manageable, the gigantic by the handy, the unapproachable by the approachable.

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8 घृतप्रतीकं व ऋतस्य धूर्षदमग्निं मित्रं न समिधान ऋञ्जते। *Ibid.,I.143.7.*

9. घृतप्रतीकामुषसं न देवीं ता नो यामन्नुरुष्यतामभीके। *Ibid., VII.85.1.*

10 सोऽन्नमत्ति प्रतीकेनेति। मुखं प्रतीकं मुखेनेत्येतत्। *Brh. Up. I.5.2.*

The above, however, is just the elementary state of symbolisation. Starting from here it may take a long stride where neither the symbol nor the object symbolised is allowed to remain in its original form. One such case in relationship to *ghṛta* is the description of *Uṣas* as cows milching *ghṛta*. This expression is placed against the background of the description of *Uṣas* in the plural as rich in cows as well as horses and heroes and invocation of them as such to cast their brilliant lustre down to the earth. With this ground-work they are conceived as cows yielding *ghṛta* for universal consumption and all round protection and well being.[11] If the *Uṣasas* are expected to yield *ghṛta*, it is quite in the fitness of things to conceive of them as cows. Cows, however, do not yield *ghṛta* directly. *Ghṛta* is a product of milk produced through human effort. Conceiving of *Uṣas* as yielding *ghṛta* involves a long process of figurative thinking including representation of dawns by cows and abstraction of *ghṛta* out of the cow's milk. Moreover, if *Uṣas* as a cow is not the real cow, the *ghṛta* yielded by the *Uṣas*-cow can by no means be the real *ghṛta*. It must symbolise what *Uṣas* has been characterised by in the first part of the mantra at least. These features of *Uṣas* are their abundance in cows, horses and heroes. While cow, among several other things, stands for illumination and knowledge, horse and hero symbolise strength, particularly animal and human. Thus *ghṛta* would naturally symbolise illumination and strength by virtue of its properties of lustre and nourishment.

Dyaus and *Prthivī* also have several times been conceived as cows milching *ghṛta*. In one of *Bharadvāja's* mantras they have been described as unobstructed, possessing profound stream, abundant in milk, true to their laws and as milching *ghṛta*. That *ghṛta* yielded by *Dyaus* and *Prthivī* as cows is something germane to the basic principle of life is evident from the second hemistich of the mantra in which the same *Dyaus* and *Prthivī* have been prayed to sprinkle the seed of life which is congenial to *Manu* and indeed his progeny.[12]

Descriptions like this, bring some sort of cosmicity to the idea of *ghṛta*, which can be elaborated on the basis of certain other mantras. In one of *Atri's* mantras, *Agni* on the one hand has been described as primeval, *purvya*, and on the other as fully established in *ghṛta, ghṛtaprasatta*.

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11 अश्वावतीर्गोमतीर्न उषासो वीरवतीः सदमुच्छन्तु भद्राः।
घृतं दुहाना विश्वतः प्रपीता यूयं पात स्वस्तिभिः सदा नः॥ *Ibid., VII.41.7.*

12 असश्चन्ती भूरिधारे पयस्वती घृतं दुहाते सुकृते शुचिव्रते।
राजन्ती अस्य भुवनस्य रोदसी अस्मे रेतः सिञ्चतं यन्मनुर्हितम्॥ *Ibid., VI.70.2.*

Establishment of the primeval *Agni* on *ghṛta* is obviously suggestive of the *ghṛta* of a different variety. It seems to refer to the basic cosmic principle responsible for the emergence of life. By virtue of being established in this *ghṛta, Agni* has been called in the same mantra as *asura*, one rich in the basic principle of life.[13] The nature of this principle can better be understood by considering it *vis-à-vis Soma*, which on the one hand has been described as yielding *ghṛta* and on the other as the navel of *Ṛta* producing immortality out of it.[14] Navel of *Ṛta*, obviously, is the ultimate principle of stasis responsible for the setting out of the dynamics. *Ghṛta* serves as an apt symbol of this principle on account of its dual states of solidity and liquidity. Needless to point out that it is the *ghṛta* itself in the solid state, which gives rise out of itself to its liquid form, though both looking as quite different from each other. Similar to it is the case of the Ultimate Reality and the world. The world appears as entirely different from the Ultimate Reality and is, therefore, considered outside the *Vedantic* milieu as having its origin partly at least in something other than the Ultimate. In Vedanta, however, it is Brahman itself, which is responsible for the appearance of the world, no matter be it through just appearance or through any real transformation. This Upaniṣadic idea is suggested already in the *Samhitā* through the symbol of *ghṛta.*

This cosmic symbolism of *ghṛta* is very much evident in the Rgvedic Hymn to Viśvakarman. According to the very opening mantra of this hymn, the Father of the creation in all His infinite wisdom brought dynamics to the *ghṛta* through the agency of His eye and mind. Just by His seeing and contemplation, He brought liquidity to the original stuff which was not anyway different from Himself. When this stuff, thus liquefied, reached the state of solidity somehow eventually, *Dyaus* and *Prthivī*, observes the seer, became expanded in space and time.[15] Thus, according to the seer, *ghṛta* is symbolic of the primeval stuff which is responsible for the creation of the world along with space and time in which the creation takes place.

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13 प्र वेधसे कवये वेद्याय गिरं भरे यशसे पूर्व्याय ।
घृतप्रसत्तो असुरः सुशेवो रायो धर्ता धरुणो वस्वो अग्निः ।। *Ibid., V.15.1.*

14 आत्मन्वन्नमो दुह्यते घृतं पयः ऋतस्य नाभिरमृतं वि जायते । *Ibid., IX.74.4.*

15 चक्षुषः पिता मनसा हि धीरो घृतमेने अजनन्नम्नमाने ।
यदेदन्ता अददृहन्त पूर्व आदिद् द्यावापृथिवी अप्रथेताम् ।। *Ibid., X.82.1.*

This idea is further confirmed by another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* in which the heaven and the earth are characterised on the one hand as immersed in *ghṛta* and on the other as serving as the receptacle of the creation. They are also described as unaging particularly due to abundance of the essence of life (*retas*) they dwell in. Obviously what is referred to as *ghṛta* in the first hemistich of the mantra, is indicated to by *retas* in the second one. Thus what the first hemistich refers to through the symbol, the second one discloses the same in its actual form.[16]

The same idea is still clearer in yet another mantra seen by *Bharadvāja* in the same hymn. According to it the heaven and the earth are enclosed in *ghṛta*, are rested on *ghṛta*, mingle with *ghṛta* and grow in *ghṛta*.[17]

Symbolism of *ghṛta*, however, is manifest at its best in one of the hymns of *Vāmadeva*, which is devoted exclusively to *ghṛta*. It talks of the sweet ocean of *ghṛta* vibrant and lustrous. The secret of *ghṛta* there is regarded as equivalent to the palate of gods and the navel of immortality.[18] This *ghṛta* is said to be produced not out of cow's milk but out of the horns of the four-horned bull.[19] The bull in its turn is described as four-horned, three-footed having two heads and seven hands and as having entered into mortals as the great god.[20] *Indra, Sūrya* and *Vena* are said to have contributed to the production of this ocean of *ghṛta*.[21] Apart from this cosmic aspect, the waves of the *ghṛta* are said to have rushed out of the ocean of the heart in countless channels and are not to be observed by one who is inimical to them. The seer, however, claims to observe them closely and see a golden reed in the midst of them.[22] Ultimately, the entire universe is said to rest on the power of *ghṛta* as well as on the ocean, on the heart and on the principle of life. Whatever of the *ghṛta* is available to mankind, however, the seer observes, is just its manifest form.

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16 घृतवती भुवनानामभिश्रियोर्वी पृथ्वी मधुदुघे सुपेशसा।
द्यावापृथिवी वरुणस्य धर्मणा विष्कभिते अजरे भूरिरेतसा।। *Ibid., VI.70.1.*

17 घृतवती द्यावापृथिवी अभीवृते घृतश्रिया घृतपृचा घृतावृधा।। *Ibid., VI.70.4.*

18. *RV.IV.58.1.*

19. *Ibid., IV.58.2.*

20. *Ibid., IV.58.3.*

21. *Ibid., IV.58.4.*

22. *Ibid., IV.58.11.*

From these details it can very well be conceived how deep is the sense in which the seer has conceived of the *ghṛta* or rather how mysterious is the principle the seer has tried to symbolise through such an obviously insignificant object as *ghṛta*. This principle is all-pervading. This is obvious from the account of it as an ocean as well as from the description of it as the support of the creation on the macrocosmic side. On the microcosmic side, he visualises its presence within each created being, including man. In support of this observation, he further points out how he practically is seeing the waves of the *ghṛta* emerging from the heart in hundreds of channels and as having a golden reed in their midst. One can imagine the width and depth of the vision of the seer behind the cognisance of the reality brought out through the symbol of *ghṛta*. It is as profound on the microcosmic side as on the macrocosmic. The vision of the ocean of *ghṛta* inside the heart along with the golden reed in the midst of that colossal psychic vastness, is something most astounding. It is comparable to what the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* recounts as the state of supreme realisation in which one finds oneself as the sole observer in the midst of an all-pervading expanse of water.[23] The Jungian collective unconscious along with the archetype of the Self in the midst of it is just a semblance of what the seer has brought out through the ocean of *ghṛta* having a golden reed in its midst. The observation that these streams of *ghṛta* are not to be perceived by the enemy, is suggestive of the state of complete reconciliation within which, according to the *Upaniṣad*, is the state of non-duality and, according to Jung, points to its semblance in the form of individuation where the conscious, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious get integrated together to form a compact whole under the all-comprehending role of the Self. It is indeed the Self, which on account of its essentially luminous character, has been symbolised here by the golden reed.

As regards the bull, the four horns of him have even traditionally been identified with the four divisions of word, i.e., *nāma, ākhyāta, upasarga* and *nipāta* or alternatively with the four Vedas. As word, no matter in the form of language or Veda, has been regarded as cognate to the reality in the Vedic tradition, the bearer of it must obviously be the all-comprehending Wisdom itself, which is responsible for the emergence of the world of reality on the one hand and its linguistic formulation in the form of word on the other.

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23 सलिल एको ऽदृष्टाऽद्वैतो भवति। एष ब्रह्मलोकः।। *Brh.Up.IV.3.23.*

The description of the ocean of *ghṛta* both on the microcosmic and macrocosmic scales equally well and with perfect parity between the two is reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of *daharākāśa* according to which the small space inside the heart is capable of being realised as having compressed in it all that is there in the outer space, including the heaven, the earth, the intermediate space along with all the heavenly bodies.[24]

That *ghṛta* of the Vedic seer is closely associated with the supernal wisdom, is evident from its association in the mantras with *kāvya*, the Vedic wisdom. In one of *Viśvāmitra's* mantras, for instance, *Agni* on the one hand has been described as having *ghṛta* as his façade, and on the other as conversant in the entire wisdom.[25] In another mantra, *Kutsa Angirasa*, the seer, compares the offering of prayers to *Rbhus* with the offering of *ghṛta* by means of ladles. Here obviously *ghṛta* is symbolic of the wisdom, *manīṣā*, embodied in the mantra. Similarly, in another mantra, addressed to *Agni*, the promoter of *Ṛta*, the production of the word of wisdom, *dhiṣaṇā*, has been compared to the offering of purified *ghṛta* to the divinity.[26] In another mantra, the prayer offered to *Indra* has been compared with the offering of the purified *ghṛta*.[27] In yet another mantra, the offering of mantra to *Agni* has been compared to offering of *ghṛta* to fire by way of sacrifice.[28]

Reference to *ghṛta* by the word *ājya* in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* and assignment of a significant role to it in the cosmic creation is an axiomatic statement of highly symbolic character. In one of the mantras of this hymn while summer and autumn seasons have been symbolised by fuel and *havis* respectively, the spring season has been represented symbolically by *ājya* or *ghṛta*.[29] Equation of *ghṛta* with a particular season or fraction of time amounts to equating it with time itself. The ground for this symbolic equation is the common consumptive role of both time and *ghṛta*. If time consumes everything arising and existing in space, *ghṛta* leads to consumption of whatever is offered in the fire in course of sacrifice. If

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24 *Chh. Up. VII.1.*

25 घृतप्रतीक उर्विया व्यद्यौदुग्निर्विश्वानि काव्यानि विद्वान्। *RV.III.1.18.*

26 वैश्वानराय धिषणामृतावृधे घृतं न पूतमग्नये जनामसि। *Ibid., III.2.1.*

27 इमं स्तोममभिष्टये घृतं न पूतमद्रिवः।। *Ibid., VIII.12.4.*

28 घृतं न यज्ञ आस्ये३सुपूतं गिरं भरे वृषभाय प्रतीचीम्। *Ibid., V.12.1.*

29 यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत।
वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः।। *Ibid., X.90.6.*

time is process, *ājya*, being derived from *aj*, to drive, is the promoter of the process of consumption.

It, however, is creative also at the same time. And in that respect too, it bears close resemblance to time. Time can consume only if things are produced in time-space continuum. Similarly, *ājya* can promote consumption only when things to be consumed are produced through it. This aspect of *ājya* is also taken due care of in this hymn. According to it, the sacrifice of Himself by the Creator resulted in the emergence of *ājya* of variegated colour and it was out of this *ājya* there were born animals of all varieties living in air, in forests and villages.[30] As a matter of fact, *ājya* is produced out of the milk yielded by animals. When the animals themselves, however, are said to be produced out of *ājya* in this instance, it is obviously suggestive of the deeper perspective in which the Vedic seer is taking *ājya* to signify the basic principle of life which is emerging and being equally well consumed by the process of time.

Thus, while *ghṛta* brings out particularly the cognitive and illuminative aspect of the reality, *ājya* is used primarily to symbolise its consumptive as well as creative aspect.

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30 तस्माद्यज्ञात् सर्वहुतः संभृतं पृषदाज्यम्।
पशून् तांश्चक्रे वायव्यानारण्यान् ग्राम्याश्च ये।। *Ibid., X.90.8*

Bull

The Vedas are deeply steeped in the background formed pre-eminently by bovines like bull, cow, calf and their products. It only bears out their prominence in the then life and the consequent percolation of them in the seer's psyche. Consequently, he makes use of them in a variety of ways ranging from the grossest to the subtlest. To study them in all their nuances, therefore, is likely to provide us with a sure key to the understanding of the nature of the Vedic composition as well as the real thrust of its ideas.

To begin with the bull, it has been used as an adjective to several gods including *Indra, Agni, Bṛhaspati* and *Parjanya*. Out of these also, while *Bṛhaspati* has been called bull, *vṛṣabha*, only once or twice in the whole of the *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā* and *Parjanya* only four or five times, *Agni* and *Indra* have been addressed as such several times more numerously. This statistical variation, however, does by no means lead to any significant conclusion, since it seems more due to the numerical pre-eminence of *Indra* and *Agni* as compared to other gods including *Soma, Bṛhaspati* and *Parjanya* in the *Saṁhitā* than to any other reason.

As regards the thrust of meaning conveyed by the symbol of bull, the most apparent one relates to power. Bull has been used most abundantly as the source of power in India since time immemorial. To speak in concrete historical terms, bull is the mightiest animal depicted on a large number of seals dug out from the ravages of *Mohen-jo-daro, Harappa* and other sites of Indus civilisation dating from 2800 BC to 1600 BC. The depiction only bears out tangibly the regard of the then Indians towards this animal. Since then, at least, until now this animal has formed the backbone of the Indian economy by virtue of its might. This cognisance is evident already there in the

figurative reference to gods in the Veda as bulls. *Agni*, for instance, has been referred to in one of the mantras of the *Ṛgveda* as a bull and has further been specified in the same breath as enhancer of power and nourishment.[1] Interestingly enough, if bull has formed the greatest source of power in India throughout the ages, fire, in the form of electricity is doing the same in the modern times. It indeed is increasingly coming up as the substitute of bull. To describe *Agni* as a bull, therefore, besides its obvious meaning, has implicit in it a much deeper significance.

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1 त्वमग्ने वृषभः पुष्टिवर्धनः । *RV.I.31.5.*

So is the case with *Indra*. Visualising him as a bull, the seer invokes him earnestly to drink Soma to his full content along with *Maruts*, of course. As per the seer's vision, this is meant for his rejoicing and accomplishing his heroic deeds.[2] If *Agni* represents force at the most elementary level, *Indra* represent it at the much higher level. If *Agni* is described as an impetuous bull and in this capacity is prayed to shine brilliantly, *Indra* is represented through the image of a bull controlled by as many as seven ropes and making the same number of rivers flow down the plains.[3] Obviously there is some sort of close correspondence between the ropes of the bull and the rivers made to flow through the agency of *Indra*. It is significant to point out that amongst the primary duties of the bull as the animal of power, drawing of water from the well has been an important one. That water was very well drawn from the well through leather bags is obvious from *Ṛgveda V.83.7*. As regards the animal used in drawing the bag out of the well, understandably it was the bull. This can be inferred from the widespread and long tradition of the use of this animal in this task throughout the whole country until recently and to some extent even now. Now if the actual bull can draw so much water as to make the channel of water full and the field inundated, *Indra* in the same capacity can make a large part of the land inundated by means of water flowing through as many as seven channels.

These rivers, however, need not be taken as actual ones and as forming the object of description by the seer in any final sense. Just as the channel of water filled by the bull's exercise of power, in spite of all its actuality, is used as a simile to the flowing of the seven rivers, even so the latter may very well be taken as suggesting to something quite beyond their range and hence as symbolic in their account. The phenomenon suggested by the seven rivers may very well be conceived as one of the planes of being, which too have been taken as seven in number. Thus, what the actual bull does on the small scale of the farmer's field, *Indra* as the figurative bull accomplishes the same on the universal and cosmic scale. One of the utilities of symbols lies in bringing out ideas in abundance and at a much higher plane by means of quite petty things in the surrounding world. This is evident in the symbol of bull suggesting to the sustenance of the seven planes of being on the universal scale.

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2 मरुत्वाँ इन्द्र वृषभो रणाय पिबा सोममनुष्वधं मदाय। *Ibid., III.47.1.*

3 यः सप्तरश्मिर्वृषभस्तुविष्मानवासृजत्सर्तवे सप्त सिन्धून्। *Ibid., II.12.12.*

This interpretation gets confirmed, among many others, by a significant mantra seen by *Kavaşa Ailūşa*. Contemplating over the material cause of the universe in all its immensity he, as is usual with the Vedic seer, taking it as a concrete and well-designed structure, analogically a wooden one, queries about the forest where the particular tree was grown, which supplied the wood out of which this structure is constructed. He asks as to what was that particular forest and what particular tree therein out of which this universe has come to be constructed. This structure, obviously, comprises the heaven and the earth. These, in his view, are perfectly settled and ordered. They are un-ageing *ajara* also. This expression is reminiscent of the steady-state theory of the universe wherein physicists, after long observations, experimentations and speculation seem to be settling down. The seer also characterises the heaven-earth combination as self-sufficient in themselves. And yet he regards them as a pair of bags of commodity borne by a bull, which is absolutely self-propelled and uses his skin as the stainer to make the Soma of his delightful experience trickle down to the creatures also. In this respect, he is compared to the sun, which makes manifest itself through the multitude of its rays. Just as the sun manifests itself through its rays, even so this supra-cosmic bull makes his delight trickle down the creation so as to feed and keep it sustained. It is this bull which by bearing the heaven and the earth on his back, as a pair of bags, brings completeness to the totality of the reality which, though appearing to be complete with the combination of the heaven and the earth themselves, remains deficient without the supra-cosmic bull, as the supreme organic being absolutely necessary for sustaining and guiding the universe as well as making it delightful for the creatures.[4]

That this bull is not merely the bearer of the load of the heaven and the earth but is ultimately their material cause itself is evident from another allegorical account of him by *Dīrghatamas*. He recounts his vision of a bull being roasted by a band of heroes above this lower world and indeed in the centre of the totality of the reality. The roasting was done in the

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4. किं स्विद्वनं क उ स वृक्ष आस यतो द्यावापृथिवी निष्टतक्षुः।
संतस्थाने अजरे इतऊती अहानि पूर्वीरुषसो जरन्त।।
नैतावदेना परो अन्यदस्त्युक्षा स द्यावापृथिवी बिभर्ति।
त्वचं पवित्रं कृणुते स्वधावान् यदीं सूर्यं न हरितो वहन्ति।। *Ibid., X.31.7-8.*

fire of the excreta of the bull himself. The bull was variegated. It is out of the roasting of the bull, observes the seer, that all the primary principles operative in the sustenance of the world are produced. [5] A relatively straightforward restatement of this symbolic account is to be found in the famous hymn to *Puruşa*, where the same bull is viewed as a person, *Puruşa*, being sacrificed by himself and thus serving as the source of all basic principles of sustenance.[6] This *Puruşa* himself in the third and fourth mantras of the hymn is conceived as four-footed giving rise to the creation through the movement of his one foot while keeping in reserve the remaining three feet in absolute immortality.[7] It bears out how elastic the seer is in his representation of the reality shifting unhesitatingly the form of the symbol from person to bull and from the bull to the person and yet keeping his concentration always fixed to what he is intending to represent through that particular image.

How the symbol of bull has been used effectively to bring out the seer's vision of the process of creation is evident further from another mantra addressed to *Agni*. The context is sacrificial. The fire is being tended carefully and lovingly as a child of one's own family. It is also considered as a guest since it dwells in the house only intermittently. Yet the seer is quite cognisant of the significance of the role of *Agni* itself in the cosmic existence. He conceives of it as a bull, not of ordinary sort though. It is visualised as a thousand-horned bull scattering things around him, taking them as if they were other than himself, and thus being responsible for the creation of the universe.[8] The imagery is based on the ordinary bull splashing clay all around him by means of his horns. Since *Agni* as the bull is viewed in this mantras as performing the same act on the cosmic scale, it is conceived here as possessed of a thousand horns. On account of thousand being used in the sense of the infinity in the Veda, here also thousand is to be considered to have been used in the same sense. Thus *Agni* as the thousand-horned bull can be considered as something like the primeval ball of fire getting exploded at a certain point in time and throwing out infinite amount of stuff from within itself

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5 शकमयं धूममारादपश्यं विषूवता पर एनावरेण।
उक्षाणं पृश्निमपचन्त वीरास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्।। *Ibid., I.164.43.*

6 यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त धीरास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्। *Ibid., X.90.16.*

7 एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायांश्च पूरुषः।
पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि।। *Ibid., X.90.3.*

8 मार्जाल्यो मृज्यते स्वे दमूनाः कविप्रशस्तो अतिथिः शिवो नः।
सहस्रशृंगो वृषभस्तदोजा विश्वां अग्ने सहसा प्रास्यन्यान्।। *Ibid., V.1.8.*

by means of its infinite number of horns representing its power of explosion and expansion.

The same function has been attributed to *Indra* in another mantra by conceiving of him also as the bull of primeval antiquity and as greater than both the heaven and the earth combined.[9]

That creation is a continuous process and is taking place every moment between the heaven and the earth is evident from another figurative account where *Indra* is visualised as scratching in the midst of the two the same way as a bull scratches the soil and spreads dust all around him.[10]

In another account of cosmogonic significance *Agni* again has been conceived not only as a bull but also as a cow impregnated by the bull and thus to have started the process of creation through himself exclusively. This vision has come to *Trita Āptya*. According to it, the mystery of the existence as well as non-existence lies hidden in the highest heaven, in the birth of *Daksa* and the lap of *Aditi*, both being regarded as co-eval parents of the cosmos. *Agni*, however, the mantra continues, is the primeval product in the process of creation who played the roles of the cow and the bull both in bringing it out in all its tangibility.[11] From amongst these two roles also, *Agni* as the bull in particular has been envisioned in another mantra as impregnating the primeval creatrix conceived as a cow.[12] He, as such, has been visualised as going around speedily and impregnating the cow preceded by his roarings.

Impregnation of the cow by the bull is always accompanied by his roarings. This phenomenon has been closely noted by seers. *Viśvāmitra,* for instance, in one of his mantras, talks of *Indra*, as a bull, roaring in one *group* of cows and impregnating the other one. By way of justifying this peculiar behaviour, he has been said to play several roles himself as those of the creator of the night as well as that of *Bhaga* and the king. Obviously *Varuṇa* is associated with the night while *Bhaga* is a form of *Sūrya*. The

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9 असूत॒ पूर्वो॑ वृष॒भो ज्याया॑नि॒मा अ॑स्य शु॒रुधः॑ सन्ति पू॒र्वीः। *Ibid., III.38.5.*

10 यो घृ॒ष्णु॒ना॒ शव॑सा॒ रोद॑सी उ॒भे वृषा॑ वृष॒त्वा वृ॑ष॒भो न्यृ॑ञ्जते। *Ibid., I.54.2.*

11 अस॑च्च॒ सच्च॑ पर॒मे व्यो॑मन् दक्षस्य॒ जन्म॒न्नदि॑तेरु॒पस्थे॑।
अ॒ग्निर्ह॑ नः प्रथम॒जा ऋ॒तस्य॒ पूर्व॒ आयु॑नि वृष॒भश्च॑ धे॒नुः। *Ibid., X.5.7.*

12 एवे॑न सद्यः पर्येति॒ पार्थि॑वं। *Ibid., I.128.3.*

word *raja* is most characteristic of *Soma*. *Indra* as bull is said to have been able to roar at one place and impregnate the cows at another by virtue of playing the roles of *Varuṇa, Sūrya* and *Soma* simultaneously and showing thus the possibility of oneness of the Divinity in the midst of its diversity.[13] In the immediately following hymn he again as bull is said to be the impregnator of the cows of eternity.[14] In another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva, Agni* is described as a bull of variegated colour and yet producing semen which is uniformly white.[15] The impregnator of the cows of eternity must himself also be eternal and hence a necessary agent of the cosmic creation. If his act of impregnation is responsible for the emergence of the world in all its actuality, his *roars* have to do something vitally with the cognisance of the creation as well as its setting in motion. That creation is the materialisation of the vibration set in motion in space is a well-known fact. At the subtler trans-spatial level this vibration serves as the source of the Vedic mantras. Here *Agni* and *Indra* coincide with *Bṛhaspati* and come to be conceived equally well as bulls. It is in this capacity that *Agni* on the one hand has been described as a bull having mighty neck, and on the other as the Veda itself. In this dual capacity he is invoked to provide relief to *Manu* and his progeny.[16] It is the same bull which more allegorically is envisioned by *Vāmadeva* as four-horned, three-footed, double headed and as having seven hands. He is further said to be tied at three places and making roaring sound repeatedly while having entered into the mortals.[17]

In the midst of all the possibilities of interpretation put forth from time to time from different points of view such as sacrificial and grammatical, this much is a certainty that the mantra is addressed basically to *Agni*, though elevated to its highest possible status of creatorship of the universe, who is conceived here as a bull of peculiar sort so as to suit a number of demands on it as a symbol of utmost complexity. It represents the reality on the one hand and the corresponding basic knowledge along with its

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13 यदन्यासु वृषभो रोरवीति सो अन्यस्मिन् यूथे नि दधाति रेतः।
स हि क्षपावान्त्स भगः स राजा महद्देवानामसुरत्वमेकम्।। *Ibid., III.55.17.*

14 स रेतोधा वृषभः शश्वतीनाम्। *Ibid., III.56.3.*

15 वृषा शुक्रं दुदुहे पृश्निरूधः। *Ibid., IV.3.10.*

16 तुविग्रीवो वृषभो वावृधानोऽशत्रुर्वर्यः समजाति वेदः।
इतीममग्निममृता अवोचन् बर्हिष्मते मनवे शर्म यंसत्।। *Ibid., V.2.12.*

17 चत्वारि शृंगा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्तहस्तासो अस्य।
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति महो देवो मर्त्याँ आ विवेश।। *Ibid., IV.58.3.*

verbal expression on the other. It is by way of comprehending the reality from the ritualistic viewpoint that the bull envisioned by the seer has been conceived as representing various aspects of the sacrifice while the verbal expression of the comprehension of the reality has led eventually to its interpretation in grammatical terms. Particularly, from the second viewpoint the bull represents the grammatical structure of the language. As has been suggested by *Patañjali*, the four horns of the bull may be taken to symbolise the four kinds of words, such as noun, verb, preposition and conjunction. The three feet of him may be taken to stand for the three tenses, that is, the past, the present and the future. The two heads may be supposed to indicate to verbal and nominal formations while the seven hands may be taken to represent symbolically the seven cases of nominal, pronominal and adjectival usages. That the Vedic language has all these grammatical features, is a certainty. Prevalence of such a language amongst people in general is also indicative of the currency of this language in the country at that time. Language, and particularly the Vedic, is relatively immortal, is also perfectly correct. But treatment of language as a great god along with the supposition that it has entered into mortals having descended from the above or the world of gods, is something more significant than the commonsense understanding about any language. This shows that the language characterised by these grammatical features has something specially divine about it.

If this mantra describes it figuratively as a divine bull, another mantra seen by *Bṛhaspati Angirasa* refers to it as having entered into the psyche of seers and as having been brought from that secret position by means of sacrifice.[18] Obviously the bull and the speech found in the psyche of the seers are one and the same representing only two stages in the descent of the divine language. What was found out by people within the seers by means of sacrifice is the same bull which is said in the previous mantra to have entered into mortals in its peculiar form. As such, evidently it refers to the trans-personal state of things under which the reality of the world came to be accompanied by its cognisance as also by the linguistic formulation of the same cognisance. It is the gestalt of the cognisance, the object of cognisance and the linguistic formulation of the cognisance all in one. The bull of the mantra is indeed the same gestalt. This is why

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18 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन्तामन्वविन्दन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टाम्।
तामाभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्त रेभा अभि सं नवन्ते।। *Ibid., X.71.3*

he is amenable to so many interpretations on so many levels as the metaphysical, the ritualistic and the linguistic. The peculiar mixture of human and animal elements in his constitution is obviously intended for making him befit the symbolisation of the complex situation. All the features mentioned in him are absolutely uncommon and beyond the provisions of nature. A bull can never be four-horned. He can be three-footed not in any way but by being short of one leg. His being seven-handed is obviously owing to abstraction from the human constitution. Nevertheless, man is only two-handed and can never be seven-handed. His being tied at three places is also uncommon. Any bull at the most is tied at two places. Thus by adding so many uncommon features to the bull the seer seems to suggest to its clear symbolic character as also that of extremely complex nature. Symbols mostly are used in their original shape. It is only rarely that some change is made in a symbol's shape so as to make it more suitable in representating the idea symbolically. But to make so many changes in one and the same symbol all in a single stroke is something rarest and therefore indicative of the extremely complex nature of the idea it is intended to symbolise. In the present case, to picturise the reality as such in one stroke is a most complex and difficult task for the human consciousness to accomplish. However, as we have already seen, it can be brought out by the image of the bull stalking majestically with the load of heaven and the earth on his back. But when the same reality is also to be considered then and there *via* the same medium in its individualistic condensation as well, and particularly along with its cognisance and linguistic expression, the heavy demands on the symbol naturally make it break at seams leading to the necessity of its drastic re-shaping. This is what we find happening in the case of this bull. As the great divinity, *maho devah*, in the form of the bull he represents the Ultimate Being producing the universe by means of His virility and sustaining it on His back, as it were, with all His majesty. Entering of the same Bull, the immortal one, into mortals is symbolical of the presence of the Ultimate Being in a rather condensed form within each and every individual. It is the same idea which subsequently in the *Upaniṣads*, particularly the *Aitareya*, has been brought out through the allegory of Brahman entering into the individual through the saggital suture at the top of the head after the rest of the personality was constructed by It as an automaton apparently sufficient within itself. [19]

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19 *Aitareya Upaniṣad I.3.12.*

The Supreme Being, thus embodied within the human personality, has to evolve close correspondence with the world outside. For this, otherwise, It makes use of the sense organs as also the organs of action and the sense-mind. But for still deeper operation, It needs another instrument really suited to the task. Speech developed in the form of perfect language is that instrument, according to the Veda. This is evident from the allegory of the overturned bowl in the form of the human head having seven sacred openings around it and speech as the eighth one besides them.[20] Thus, the human speech as evolved particularly in the form of the Vedic speech or language bears close correspondence to the Supreme Being by virtue of giving exposition to It in the most intimate and comprehensive way. Since Brahman can be understood intimately by *Brahman* alone, the former has necessarily to be present in the human personality so as to be cognised closely by the latter. It necessitates the entrance of the Great God, *maho devah*, into the human personality, withstand its mortality, and assume the form of the sacred word within. Since the sacred word, *Om*, evolves gradually in the form of the Vedas with their definite linguistic form, the Great God comes to be regarded as coincident to it and be visualised as possessed of four horns, three feet, two head and seven hands in the form of the four types of words, three tenses, two sorts of terminations and seven case-endings. Language, in fact, along with its grammatical structure is the manifestation of *Om*, the Great God and is evidently what has entered into the human being or is rather found inherently there and serves as the bearer of knowledge.

In this capacity the bull has come to qualify *Bṛhaspati* in particular. In one of *Agastya's* mantras, *mahah devah vṛṣabhah* has been used as an adjective to *Bṛhaspati*. Accordingly he is said to be born of power besides being powerful. In this capacity he is prayed to infuse in the seer the object of desire which is *vīravad* and *gomad* and quick in effect and ultimately coincident with *vidyā*, knowledge.[21] Here the bull of the previously quoted mantra appears positively as *Bṛhaspati* and is unmistakably identified by the common usage of the words *mahah*, *devah* and *vṛṣabhah*. Invocation of him, as such, to provide *vidyā*, which is quick in result, further confirms the view that this bull is the bull of knowledge which is intimately associated with the actuality of things and owing to which the latter are what they are besides being known as such.

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20 अर्वाग्बिलश्चमस ऊर्ध्वबुध्नं तस्मिन्यशो निहितं विश्वरूपम्।
तस्यासत ऋषयःसप्त तीरे वागष्टमी ब्रह्मणा संविदाना।। *Brh.Up.II.2.3, See also AV.X.8.9*

21 एवा महस्तुविजातस्तुविष्मान् बृहस्पतिर्वृषभो धायि देवः।
स नेः स्तुतो वीरवद् धातु गोमद् विद्यामेषं वृजनं जीरदानुम्।। *RV.I.190.8*

In this capacity, it has also been used to qualify *Indra*. In one of his mantras, *Viśvāmitra* prays to *Indra* as the killer of *Vṛtra* and entreats him to become the guardian of words, which are true and beautiful. Another feature of the bull, that is, bearing the burden, has been brought out by using the word *vayodhāh* along with qualifying him as *vṛṣabhah*. He is called *viśvāyuh*, the upholder of the universal age. As such, he is also addressed as the supporter of age, *vayodhāh*.[22] Thus, even though invoked to serve as the guardian of words, true and beautiful, he continues to retain the other characteristic feature of the bull, *i.e.*, serving as the bearer of burden, no matter even the burden of age or continuity of life. In terms of the imagery of the great divine bull, it is equivalent to the entrance of the immortal great bull into mortals, *martyan a vivesa*. In the flux of the world and life, if there is any iota of continuity, that all is due to the entrance of the element of immortality into it or, in other words, owing to *Indra*, the divine bull, serving as the bearer of the burden of continuity of life, *vayodhāh*.

It is in view of his bearing the burden of the knowledge of the universe along with his responsibility of sustaining it that *Indra* as a bull is again described as operating by means of wisdom or wisdom shorn of discordance.[23]

The bull's association with the secret wisdom is also evident in another mantra addressed to *Agni*. Describing him as an infinitely virile and powerful bull, it has been stated in the mantra that he knows the secret place of cows, as it were, and by virtue of this quality he is prayed by the seer to make available to the latter the great wisdom.[24] The actual bull, while in search of the cow to be fertilised, seeks her from all possible recesses. On the same analogy, *Agni*, as the cosmic bull, is supposed to trace out the secret wisdom and make it available to the seer. In fact, the wisdom involved in the otherwise inexplicably precise operation of instincts is in itself suggestive of the implicit presence of such wisdom in Nature, which lies beyond the power of comprehension of the human intellect. The Vedic seer, however, makes use of this fact to show the possibility of the dawning of the higher spiritual wisdom upon the higher intellect of man, if, of course, made as intensely receptive as the

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22 पतिर्भव वृत्रहन् त्सूनृतानां गिरा विश्वायुर्वृषभो वयोधाः ।। *Ibid., III.31.18.*

23 महाँ उग्रो वावृधे वीर्याय समाचक्रे वृषभः काव्येन। *Ibid., III.36.5.*

24 सोम द्विबर्हा महि तिग्मभृष्टिः सहस्रेता वृषभस्तुविष्मान्।
पदं न गोरपगूळहं विविद्वानग्निर्मह्यं प्रेदु वोचन्मनीषाम्।। *Ibid., IV.5.3.*

instinctive desire itself. It is against some such background that *Bharadvāja* characterises *Indra* as the bull of mantras conceived as cows, demolisher of the enclosure of cows, besides being the drinker of Soma up to the lease, possessed of beautiful jaws and bearer of the thunderbolt as his weapon and capable of taking one across the ocean of ignorance and prays to him to provide protection to the seer and break the barrier to the flow of the energy.[25]

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25 स ईं पाहि य ऋजीषी तरुत्रो यः शिप्रावान् वृषभो यो मतीनाम्।
यो गोत्रभिद् वज्रभृद् यो हरिष्ठाः स इन्द चित्रां अभितृन्धि वाजान्।। *Ibid., VI.17.2.*

Horse

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Along with cow and bull, horse is another animal, which has been referred to in the Veda most frequently. There are several mantras where desire has been expressed for horse as well as cow. The question arises as to why the Vedic seers crave so much for such an animal which, unlike cow, is not supposed to have been of much use to them, if they were such in any real sense of the term. As regards cow, it is quite understandable that this animal was of prime importance for them, not only as a convenient and congenial source of food but also as an absolute necessity for their sacrificial performances. Since bull is necessarily related with cow and could be made use of for carrying load, as also for other agricultural purposes, there might be some relevance in the seer's keenness to have them also, though not in such a large number, as was the case with cow. But since horse has mainly been the martial animal, and therefore, useful particularly to the class of fighters, the seer's desire for them creates a definite problem of understanding. The solution of this difficulty obviously lies either in the Vedic seers not being of the type of meditative people who devoted their lives mainly to contemplation and self-purification, or alternatively the horse desired by them so ardently is not so much physical he is as something spiritual.

Leaving aside the question of the first alternative for the time being, when we take into consideration the second one, we, at the first instance, do not find total absence of such cases where horse may be mentioned in the purely literal sense. In one of the mantras seen by a medicine man named *Ātharvaṇa* the desire has been expressed before the goddess of herbs for getting horse, cow, clothes, and even the services of the patient concerned in lieu of the services rendered to the latter by way of curing him of a particular disease.[1] Since all the seers are not of the same order, it is quite possible that the medicine-man having become the seer might have stood in need of horse as well as cow and, therefore, might have expressed his satisfaction over getting a horse, among several other things, as a return for his services rendered to the patient. But in this case also, what is significant to note is the highest point of stress in the

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1 ओषधीरिति मातरस्तद्वो देवीरुपं ब्रुवे।
सुनेयमश्वं गां वासं आत्मानं तव पूरुष।। *RV.X.97.4.*

mantra. In this mantra that stress obviously is laid not on getting these objects but on the efficacy of the herb on account of which the patient is prepared to part with anything in his possession including his own self. Thus, horse, here too, though a little distantly, is symbolical of precious possession rather than standing in his physicality.

Otherwise, horse has been used in the Veda as an object of comparison. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by *Viśvāmitra, Agni* is characterised as a bull comparable to horse in serving as the carrier of gods.[2] Similarly, in another mantra seen by the same seer, it has been observed that *Agni* appears brilliantly like a horse when kindled out of the fire-sticks by the use of hands.[3] While in the earlier mantra the horse's serving as an animal of ride has been brought out, in the latter one it is his brilliant and brisk appearance which has come to serve as the quality of comparison. In another mantra, again it is *Agni* whose power of consumption has been brought out through its comparison with horse in this regard.[4] The horse's broad back is also made an object of comparison for giving an idea of the seat *Aśvins* have been offered on the earth by the seer.[5] In another mantra, the purity of *Agni* has been brought out by a comparison of it with a horse having been bathed in rivers.[6] Horse's loud neighing has been brought out by making it to serve as an object of comparison to the sound produced by making the *Soma* juice pass through the sieve.[7] In another mantra, *Soma* is desired to pass through the sieve so as to generate will power and efficiency like a sanctified horse proceeding for the acquisition of wealth.[8] In another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva, Agni* is compared to a horse bedecked with golden ornaments and as such is prayed to take the devotee across the sin.[9] Here the basis of comparison is formed by the horse's briskness, golden lustre and capacity to take one across troublesome situations. In

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2 वृषो॑ अ॒ग्निः समि॑ध्य॒तेऽश्वो॒ न दे॑व॒वाह॑नः।
तं ह॒विष्म॑न्त ईळते।। *Ibid., III.27.14.*

3 यद्दी॒ मन्य॑न्ति बा॒हुभि॒र्वि रो॑च॒तेऽश्वो न वा॒ज्यरु॒षो वने॒ष्वा ।। *Ibid., III.29.6*

4 भस॒दश्वो॒ न यव॑सा॒न आ॒सा।। *Ibid., VI.3.4.*

5 अश्वो॒ न वा॒जी शु॒नपृ॑ष्ठो। *Ibid., VII.70.1.*

6 अश्वो॒ न नि॒क्तो न॒दीषु। *Ibid., VIII.2.2.*

7 अश्वो॒ न च॑क्रदो॒। *Ibid., IX.64.3.*

8 पव॑स्व सोम॒ क॒त्वे॒ दक्षा॒याश्वो॒ न नि॒क्तो वा॒जी धना॑य। *Ibid., IX.109.10.*

9 यस्त्वा॑ दो॒षा य उ॒षसि प्र॒शंसा॑त् प्रि॒यं वा॑ त्वा कृ॒णव॑ते ह॒विष्मा॑न्।
अश्वो॒ न स्वे दम॒ आ हे॒म्यावा॒न्तमं॑हसः पीपरो दा॒श्वांस॑म्।। *Ibid., IV.2.8.*

another mantra addressed to *Soma*, the latter is prayed to redeem one who has taken it like a horse set free by the charioteer.[10] Here the horse's capacity to reach the state of redemption through the rigour of action has been brought to the fore. In yet another mantra, the fetching of the purified *Soma* juice to the sacrificial ground is compared to a horse being taken from one place to another by catching hold of his reins.[11]

All these and kindred points of comparison do obviously open the possibility of the use of horse by the seer for bringing out the related qualities and values without the use of the sign of comparison. This is a qualitative jump from *upamā* to *rūpaka* as per Sanskrit poetics. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by *Śaṁyu Bārhaspatya*, it has been stated that the friendship of *Indra* is highly dependable and that for one in search of cow he behaves like a cow and, therefore, for one in search of horse, he should act like a horse.[12] In this mantra cow and horse are no more mere objects of comparison for the respective actions or attributes of *Indra* but have come to form the mould in which the action of *Indra* is to be moulded so as to suit the aspirations of the seer. Similarly, in another mantra the *Muni* has been taken as a horse and friend of air who, as such, dwells across both the oceans.[13] In this mantra, the Muni gets completely merged in the horse in the matter of travelling from one ocean to the other within no time, as it were.

When the subject of comparison gets completely merged in the object of comparison, the resultant figure of speech is called *rūpaka*, metaphor. In this figure of speech, the subject of comparison hardly needs to be mentioned. It is substituted mostly by the object of comparison and works through it, making its content flow through the channel of the latter. For instance, while recounting the role of *Agni* in the context of the cosmic creation it has been stated by *Kaṇva Ghaura* that when after killing *Vṛtra* the other gods made the space intermediate to the heaven and the earth worth dwelling for creatures, *Agni* began to act as a bull

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10 इन्दुः पविष्ट चेतनः प्रियः कवीनां मती।
सृजदश्वं रथीरिव।। *Ibid., IX.64.10.*

11 अश्वं न त्वा वाजिनं मर्जयन्तोऽच्छा बर्ही रशनाभिर्नयन्ति।। *Ibid., IX.87.1.*

12 दूणाशं सख्यं तव गौरसि वीर गव्यते।
अश्वो अश्वायते भव।। *Ibid., VI.45.26.*

13 वातस्याश्वौ वायोः सखाऽथो देवेषितो मुनिः।
उभौ समुद्रावा क्षेति यश्च पूर्व उतापरः।। *Ibid., X.136.5.*

and the horse began to neigh in the quest of cows.[14] Here *Agni* is just scantily suggested by the word *dyumni*, while his total role gets represented by *vṛṣa*, bull, and *asva*, horse. To take another example from a mantra addressed to *Soma*, it is stated in it that *Soma,* being terrific, agile, and laden with honey on his back is a tall horse and as such is being yoked to the chariot of sacrifice, having wide wheels and is being massaged by sisters who by virtue of being of common origin with the horse, are thus energising him by this act of theirs.[15] In this figurative account *Soma*, the subject, has not been mentioned at all by means of any word whatever. He is entirely represented by *aśva*, horse, while sacrifice is represented equally well by the chariot. Similarly the fingers used in extracting *Soma* juice and cleansing it are wholly substituted by sisters. Further, just as the sisters have their common origin in their parents and owing to this bond of unity come to form a formidable force in themselves, even so the fingers of any one of the hands, though quite frail if taken separately, come to possess together the force of the fist. By giving massage to the figurative horse, they are supposed, therefore, to accord their combined force to their common brother.

This metaphorical way of expression largely used in the Veda has scarcely been studied in its proper perspective. The commentators right from the time of *Yāska* have tried rather to dilute its significance by excessive use of the derivative method of interpretation. For instance, in this very mantra quoted last, *aśva* has been explained by *Sāyaṇa* primarily as pervasive, *vyāptam* on the basis of derivation of the word from *as*, to pervade.[16] Of course, interpretation through derivation is of immense use and is rather indispensable. But stopping with the sheer derivative meaning makes the flow of the thought content dismally stunted. This is exactly what has happened with the Vedic thought having been made to pass through the hopelessly narrow channel of explanation provided by the traditional commentators right from the time of *Yāska*. As a matter of fact, the *Brāhmaṇas* had started interpretation of the Veda with all their interpretative limitations quite in right earnest. In their explanations,

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14 घ्नन्तो॑ वृ॒त्रम॑तरन् रोद॑सी अप उ॒रु क्षया॑य चक्रिरे।
भुव॒त्कण्वे॒ वृषा॒ द्युम्न्याहु॑तः क॒न्दु॒दश्वो॒ गवि॑ष्टिषु।। *Ibid., I.36.8.*

15 मधु॑पृष्ठं घो॒रम॒यास॒मश्व॑ं॒ रथे॑ युञ्जन्त्यु॒रुच॑क्रमृ॒ष्वम्।
स्वसा॑र॑ ई जा॒मयो॒ मर्ज॑यन्ति॒ सना॑भयो वा॒जिन॑मू॒र्जय॑न्ति।। *Ibid., IX.89.4.*

16 अश्वम् अश्वस्थानीयं व्याप्तं सोमम्। *Sāyaṇa's commentary on RV.IX.89.4.*

they expatiated on figurative expressions as well as made use of the tool of derivation. It is over-emphasis on the tool of derivation by *Yāska* which relegated the figurative side to a great extent to the background. Following this line of interpretation, for instance, if we were to take *aśva* as a mere adjective to *Soma*, we would hardly find ourselves in a position to account for the chariot, the tall wheels of it and the massaging of the *Soma* by the sisters and energising the winsome *Soma*. The seer's vision must understandably not have stopped with the stunted derivative signification but should have further been involved in free perusal of the idea carried onward through the figurative expression concerned. Magnificent striding along objects appropriated figuratively as symbols rather than playing on the formation of words is an eminently more probable route of visionary expression. As such, in any interpretative venture, it has to be taken in this comprehensive perspective rather than is to be kept unduly constrained within the narrow channel of derivation.

Pursuing the vital line of simile and metaphor, therefore, when we think over their usages, what we normally find is that they are usually incidental and fortuitous. They are based on the perception of a certain common quality, pattern of behaviour or structural similarity between both the objective and subjective sides of comparison. In poetry these common properties forming the linkage between the object and the subject are normally trifling but interesting owing to their novelty. In the hunt for novelty, therefore, the poetry goes on inventing newer and newer objects of comparison, no matter howsoever fragile they be in their signification. The case of the Veda is somewhat different from that of the poet. Instead of being after novelty, the Vedic seer aims at the precision of communication. This is evident from the commonness of similes and metaphors used by him as well as other means of expression. Needless to point out that the *Ṛgveda* is a creation of seers spread over no less than some one million square kilometres of the Indian soil and working for generations. As such, there was all likelihood of enormous variation in the imagery of individual seers separated as they usually were from one another by hundreds of kilometres in distance and hundreds of years in time along with the variation in social and geographical perspectives. The immensity of such probable variations is verifiable from a close study of poetic creations of *Kashmiri, Punjabi, Gujarati, Himanchali,* and *Hindi* during the second millennium A.D. in spite of all the communicational development and therefore the possibility of intercommunication among authors during the latter period as contrasted to the Vedic era when this entire area in all probability was sequestered by formidable forests as well as lack of means of communication. Even then, however, when we study

the Veda, we find close affinity in similes, metaphors, allegories, etc., from seer to seer, irrespective of their belonging to distant places, times and climes. This affinity is obviously the sure mark of maturity the respective seers had reached in their vision and ideation. It is in such maturity and common concurrence that lies the secret of transformation of similes and metaphors into symbols. Rooted, as they are, in similes and metaphors, symbols are only distant echoes of the object they symbolise. Yet due to some mysterious psychic coincidence, consolidated by frequent usage, the similes and metaphors have come not only to be used repeatedly in common by diverse seers but have also acquired some sort of autonomy in representing their respective objects of comparison totally by themselves. It is in this total representation of the object of description by its similitude that lies the secret of the birth of symbolism. By virtue of having been used copiously by seers as similes and metaphors such animals as cow, bull, horse, etc., have every likelihood of having acquired the status of symbol in the Veda so as to have become worthy of denoting by themselves the sense intended to be communicated by what they represented. It is indeed the misunderstanding about such subtle usages which has created formidable problem in the interpretation of the Veda to some extent since long past also but in an aggravated form in the modern time with all its inordinate inclination towards the physicality of things of even spiritual orientation.

How grossly misdirected such an interpretation is, can be gauged from certain usages of horse in the *Ṛgveda*. In one of the mantras of *Dīrghatamas*, for instance, the question is asked regarding the last extremity of the earth, the centre of the creation as also the ultimate source of the word. Obviously all the three questions are extremely intricate and formidable to answer even in the modern age in spite of its being equipped with profound knowledge in the fields of geography, geology, astronomy and linguistics. On account of being round or rather more precisely elliptical, one is not in a position to tell where the earth ends and where it begins. So is the case with the centre of the creation. In contrast to the Western view held quite until recently that the earth itself is the centre of the universe, the Indian seer as far back as the *Rgvedic* age raises the pertinent question of the centre of the universe, which has remained unanswered even until now despite so enormous development in astronomy and astrophysics. As regards the ultimate source of word, man has still remained a babbling child to attempt any plausible answer to this question. It is in the row of all these three so

formidable questions that the fourth one also is put in the same mantra and relates to the semen of the virile horse.[17]

Considering the seriousness of the context formed by the other three questions, is it anyway justifiable to take the question regarding the semen of the horse in any physical sense? If not at all, as is the most likely consensus to emerge, one cannot afford to take the horse here in any literal and realistic sense. The horse here must stand for something of universal nature and thus be symbolic of it.

Fortunately, however, the seer has spared us of speculation by himself providing precise answers to all these questions. As regards the first question relating to the end of the earth, he identifies this end in the form of the sacrificial pit. The rationale behind this identification is obvious. The sacrificial pit is the end of the earth inasmuch as it is by offering everything in this pit by way of sacrifice that one was supposed to have been enabled to come to the end of the earthly life. As regards the second question, the sacrifice itself has been suggested by the seer here as the centre of the creation. The rationale of this answer lies in the admittance of self-sacrifice by the Creator, as envisaged in the Vedic hymn to *Puruṣa,* as the root cause or source of the creation. Further on, while Brahman has been indicated as the ultimate source of the word, as has been consolidated subsequently by *Bhartṛhari* in his *Vākyapadīya*, the *Soma* has been pointed out as the semen of the horse.[18] Whatever view of Soma we may take, the semen of the horse is symbolic of it. To unlock the symbolism involved in this statement, while *Soma* along with *Agni* represents the ultimate stuff of creation, which is represented by the horse's semen here, the horse, therefore, must be symbolic of the Creator, *Prajāpati* himself. This symbolism becomes evident in the *Brāhmaṇas* where the sacrificial horse has often been identified with Prajāpati.[19]

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17 पृच्छामि त्वा परमन्तं पृथिव्या पृच्छामि यत्र भुवनस्य नाभिः।
पृच्छामि त्वा वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतः पृच्छामि वाचः परमं व्योम।। *RV.I.164.34.*

18 इयं वेदिः परो अन्तः पृथिव्या अयं यज्ञो भुवनस्य नाभिः।
अयं सोमो वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतो ब्रह्मायं वाचः परमं व्योम।। *Ibid., I.164.35*

19 अश्व इव वै प्रजापतिरासीत्। *Kāṭhaka Samhitā XXIV.8*
यस्मात्प्रजापतिरालब्धोऽश्वोऽभवत् तस्मादश्वो नाम। *Tait.Samhitā III.9.21.4*

II

Cosmic creation is a tumultuous act involving tremendous force and movement. As per the vision of the Vedic seer, *Agni* is the main actor in this drama of emergence of the tangible from the midst of the intangible. It is absolutely white tending to reddishness with growth in age. Though absolutely young, it has got inherently present in it stupendous force and velocity. As soon as born, it attracts towards it the seven planes of being in all their dynamics. This situation has been envisioned by the Vedic seer as one of the birth of the young horse absolutely white in colour. As soon as born, the young horse strives to get up and move. Though small, it has compressed in the force and speed of the fully grown-up horse. The cosmic tumult caused by the emergence of *Agni* is brought out symbolically in the mantra in the form of mares rushing towards the newly born young horse. While the mare took care of him, gods brought lustre to him.[1] Obviously it is the seven planes of being which in the first hemistich of the mantra are indicated to as `*moving ones*', *yahvih*, and in the second one are given the form of mares rushing towards the young horse. Birth of *Agni* in the cosmos must obviously have been a momentous event. This event must have created great tumult on all planes of being as they are interrelated with one another. What could be a more befitting symbolic image to bring out all these aspects of that cosmic event than that of a young horse being born with all its sprightliness and attracting the mares of the group so as to rush to it? The description of the planes of being encircling the young horse as moving rivers or rushing mares has its co-ordinate in the well known Yajurvedic mantra according to which in this dynamic universe everything exists in a constantly mobile state.[2] Any misgiving likely to arise regarding the symbolic nature of the horse of this mantra, gets annulled by the seven planes of existence rushing towards the horse. It cannot be taken as an ordinary or realistic horse. This interpretation becomes still more confirmed by just the second mantra hence, where the same seven dynamic states or planes of being are characterised as seven sounds,

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1. अर्वर्धयन्त्सुभगं सप्त यह्वीः श्वेतं जज्ञानमरुषं महित्वा।
   शिशुं न जातमभ्याहुरश्वा देवासो अग्निं जनिमन् वपुष्यन्।। *RV.III.1.4.*
2. ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्। *YV.40.1.*

sapta vāṇīh.[3] In this mantra, the seven dynamic beings are described as divine in nature, non-violent, undressed and yet not naked, perpetually young and as having a common origin. Their non-violence and perpetual youthfulness are symbolic of absolute conservation in that state of being while their common origin is suggestive of the obvious organismic interrelationship of things there. Characterisation of those forces as sounds is suggestive of their utmost subtleness as well as pervasiveness. In view of such details, there is little doubt left in considering those mares as subtlest cosmic forces serving as the basis of the manifestation of the tangible world.

The symbolic character of the Vedic horse gets further confirmation from the fact that *Uṣas* is said to ride a chariot driven by horses perfectly well controlled. The immortality of *Uṣas* takes her riding the chariot to time immemorial or rather to the state of timelessness. As such, the horses yoked to her chariot also must be timeless. This again must refer to the beginnings of creation when heavenly bodies got created out of the original luminous stuff and the interplay between light and darkness resulted in the appearance of dawns with perfect regularity or punctuality defying calculation by the human mind.[4]

So is the case with the horses of the *Maruts*. While moving constantly, never do these horses get tired. Their speed also is stupendous. They are said to go across the whole way within no time.[5] Now, the horse, which is taken up by such a universal force as *Vāta* for its reaching everywhere without any lapse of time, cannot be treated as a realistic horse. From the account of these horses, as given in the mantra, it is obvious that they, instead of being any realistic horses, are representations of light which travels at stupendous velocity appearing to take no time at all in reaching its destination, howsoever distant. If this interpretation be held plausible, the horse drawing the chariot of *Vāta* would turn to be symbolic representing the primeval force, which not only activates the air but moves at least as fast as light itself.

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3 ब्रध्राजो सीम नदतीरदब्धा दिवो यह्वीरवसाना अनग्नाः
सना अत्र युवतयः सयोनीरेकं गर्भं दधिरे सप्त वाणीः ।। *RV.III.1.6.*

4 उषो देव्यमर्त्या वि भाहि चन्द्ररथा सूनृता ईरयन्ती ।
आ त्वा वहन्तु सुयमासो अश्वा हिरण्यवर्णां पृथुपाजसो ये ।। *Ibid., III.61.2.*

5 यन्मरुतः सभरसः स्वर्णरः सूर्य उदिते मदथा दिवो नरः ।
न वोऽश्वाः श्रथयन्ता ह सिस्रतः सद्यो अस्याध्वनः पारमशनुथ ।। *Ibid., V.54.10.*

Another mantra addressed to *Sūrya* makes this point still clearer. Here the horses of *Sūrya* are described as lustrous, variegated, ever-mobile, given to feel exhilarated in any state of things be, standing curved at the back of the heaven and going round the heaven and the earth within no time.[6] The ever-mobility, curvature and taking no time in reaching the destination do not only make the horses referred to here go beyond all scope of actuality, but also state something pertinently significant about the characteristic features of light as discovered by scientists right in the twentieth century. In the first place, as per the scientist's discovery, light, more than anything else always remains in the state of mobility. Bereft of the mobility, it would get rendered into a non-entity. In the second place, it is the fastest among all entities and forces in the universe. In the third place, as scientists have observed, the passage of its travail is always curved, owing to the boundedness of the universe. *Etagvāh, sadyah dyāvā-prthivī pari yanti* and *namasyantah* are the three terms used in the mantra which obviously bring about the above-mentioned characteristic features of light respectively as understood by modern scientists. How misunderstood the Vedic language has been throughout on crucial points may be pointed out here through what the commentators and translators have done with the word *namasyantah* which obviously is formed out of *namas* as derived from *nam*, to bend, adding the suffix *satr* along with *kyac*. Addition of *śatṛ* makes the participial form active in mood as contrasted with the *sanac*, which makes it passive. Failing to understand the real significance of the use of active voice here, *Ācārya Sāyaṇa* takes it to have been done so only through circumspection, *vyatyaya*, really intended to communicate the sense of being bowed down by us, *namasyamānāh*. What a twisting of the meaning which plays havoc with the entire significance of the mantra! Griffith does nothing better than this by translating the word as `bearing our prayers'. This is how Vedic mantras have been harmed by twisting the meaning unjustifiably instead of trying to make out their sense directly as it accrues out of the text, no matter howsoever funny it may look at the moment in the absence of corroborative understanding from one's own side.

Finally, the proposition put forth here that barring a few cases here and there making use of horse in the realistic sense, this animal appears in the Veda much more frequently and prominently in the symbolic sense of force and velocity mostly in their primeval form, is evident from the seer's

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6 भद्रा अश्वा हरितः सूर्यस्य चित्रा एतग्वा अनुमाद्यासः।
नमस्यन्तो दिव आ पृष्ठमस्थुः परि द्यावापृथिवी यन्ति सद्यः।। *Ibid., I.115.3.*

direct characterisation of *Agni* as a horse abounding in force. He asks people to stimulate the omniscient god *Agni*, the horse, as force embodied, to take his seat on the sacred *kuśa* grass.[7] The direct equivalence of *Agni* with horse provides us with the sure key to unlock the symbolism of horse in the Veda.

In this context, it would be interesting to point out that the Vedic seer is meticulously conscious of the colour of the horse also, and there too particularly of the symbolic significance of the black and the white. There is a mantra seen by *Kakṣīvat* in which there is the account how the *Aśvins* offered a white horse to *Pedu* whose own horse had failed him in distress.[8] The seer is so much impressed by this motif of the white horse that he himself brings it in again in the very next hymn in the *Samhitā* by qualifying the white horse with speediness, winsomeness, excellence, killing of the dragon, fame and capability to take one across.[9] In the next hymn once more he comes to the same theme of the white horse adding significantly to the details of the previously quoted mantra including the horse's having been provided his speed by god *Indra* himself.[10] The importance of the white horse can further be gauged from the fact that following her illustrious father, his daughter *Ghoṣa* also refers to him in one of her mantras describing him further as empowered by ninety nine forces and as friendly to one who makes him move.[11] Extolling the white horse so much by more than one seer is obviously indicative of it having got established in the mind of the Vedic seer as a symbol of goodness. This proposition gets further confirmed by a mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* who talks of the white horse of *Uṣas* in the same strain.[12]

The horse of *Uṣas* is obviously no horse at all. It must be the light bringing in the dawn by dispelling darkness which in the Veda is always treated as symbolic of the evil.

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7 प्र नू॒नं जा॒तवे॑दसमश्वं॑ हिनोत वा॒जिनम्। इ॒दं नो॑ ब॒र्हिरा॒सदे।। *Ibid.X.188.1.*

8 यम॑श्विना द॒दथुः श्वेतमश्व॑मघा॒श्वाय शश्व॒दित्स्व॒स्ति।
तद्वां दा॒त्रं महि की॒र्तेन्यं भूत् पै॒द्वौ वा॒जी सद॒मिद्धव्यो॑ अ॒र्यः।। *Ibid.,I.116.6.*

9 पुरु वर्पां॑स्यश्विना॒ दधा॑ना॒ नि प॒देव॑ ऊहथुरा॒शुमश्व॑म्।
स॒ह॒स्र॒सां वा॒जिन॒मप्रतीतमहि॒हनं॑ श्रव॒स्यं तरु॑त्रम्।। *Ibid., I.117.9.*

10 यु॒वं श्वे॒तं प॒देव॒ इन्द॑जूतमहि॒हन॑मश्विनादत्त॒मश्व॑म्।
जो॒हूत्र॑मर्यो अ॒भिभू॑तिमुग्रं॒ सह॒स्र॒सां वृष॑णं वीड्वङ्गम्।। *Ibid., I.118.9.*

11 युवं श्वे॒तं पे॒दवेऽश्वि॒नाश्वं न॒वभि॒र्वाजैर्न॒वती च वा॒जिनम्।
च॒र्कृत्यं॑ ददथु॒र्दाव॒यत्स॑खं भगं॒ न नृभ्यो॒ हव्यं॑ मयो॒भुव॑म्।। *Ibid., X.39.10.*

12. श्वेतं नयन्ती सुदृशीकमश्वम्। *Ibid., VII.77.3.*

In contrast to the white horse, therefore, the black horse must have been taken as symbolic of the evil. There is at least one positive evidence to bear out the veracity of this proposition. It occurs in the highly figurative hymn to *Akṣa*, dice. This hymn states how the gambler was a noble man leading a happy life replete with joys but for his passion for gambling which led him ultimately to his complete ruination where his wife was stopped from coming to him by her mother, while his father, mother and brothers disowned him completely allowing him to be taken away as a captive by his creditors. In this context his fate is compared to that of a costly horse having become old and therefore not getting the food due to him.[13] All these things have been compressed and stated symbolically by the seer in the form of a chariot getting yoked to it brown horses and setting out on its journey in the first half of the day and making its rider step eventually in fire.[14] In this statement the brown horses are symbolic of the dices while the chariot stands for the mode of life of the gambler. The first part of the day represents the youth of the gambler when he takes up to gambling while his stepping in fire symbolises the disastrous consequences of his life as a gambler. What is particularly noteworthy in this allegory is the colour of the horses. Instead of white, it is brown. Understandably, had it been black, it would have led the rider to still worse consequences.

In this context it would be useful to remind ourselves of the allegory of the chariot in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where the whole life has been conceived as a chariot drawn by horses in the form of sense organs and the organs of action. The organs, if controlled, are likened to good horses while uncontrolled ones are castigated as bad horses.[15] In this allegory, evidently the colour of the horses has not been pointed out, but from their characterisation as good horses, *sadaśvāh*, and bad horses, *dustaśvāh*, the colour becomes quite obvious, particularly against the background of the white horse of the *Samhitā* both as given to *Pedu* by the *Aśvins* in the state of distress and as yoked to the chariot of *Uṣas* in her campaign against darkness.

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13 द्वेष्टि श्वश्रूरप॑ जा॒या रु॑णद्धि॒ न ना॑थितो वि॑न्दते मर्डि॒तार॑म्।
अश्व॑स्येव॒ जर॑तो॒ वस्न्य॑स्य॒ नाहं वि॑न्दामि क्रि॒तव॑स्य॒ भोग॑म्।।
अ॒न्ये जा॒यां परि॑मृशन्त्यस्य॒ यस्याग्रं॑धद्वेदने॒वाज्य॑क्षः।
पि॒ता मा॒ता भ्रात॑र एनमाहुर्न जा॑नीमो॒ नय॑ता ब॒द्धमे॒तम्।। *Ibid., X.34.3-4.*

14 स्त्रिय॑ दृष्ट्वाय॑ कि॒तवं॑ त॒तापा॒न्येषां जा॒यां सुकृ॑तं च॒ योनि॑म्।
पू॒र्वाह्णे अश्वा॑न् युयुजे हि ब॒भ्रून् त्सो अ॒ग्नेरन्ते॑ वृष॒लः प॑पाद।। *Ibid., X.34.11.*

15 *Kaṭha Up.III.3-9.*

This tradition, however, is kept continued in Plato's famous allegory of the chariot where the chariot of life is supposed to be drawn by two horses, one of which is white while the other one is black. If the white horse gets the support of the charioteer, the life becomes noble, but if his support is diverted to the black one, it becomes ignoble, so says Plato.

The symbolism of the chariot appears in a still clearer form in the *Samhitā* in a mantra seen by *Bharadvāja* in which it has been stated that a good charioteer, while taking his seat on the chariot, drives the horses ahead wherever he desires depending on the state of his mind controlling the reins which always obey the dictates of the former.[16] This mantra holds the key to the symbolism of chariot in the Veda by virtue of putting forth equally well both the strands of symbolism, *i.e.*, the symbol and the symbolised content in the form of the chariot, horses and reins on the one hand and mind and its ancillaries on the other. It is this idea which gets a still more cogent expression in the *Yajurveda* where it has been stated that, just like a good charioteer controlling the horses by means of reins, the mind, unaging and most speedy and indwelling the heart, has got to be auspicious in its willing for traversing the path of life nobly and meaningfully.[17]

Horse has very closely been associated in the Veda with the acquisition of secret knowledge. In the famous story of *Dadhyan*, referred to several times in the *Ṛgveda*, the horse's head plays the crucial role in the transmission of the divine knowledge to the *Aśvins* which otherwise would have remained confined to seer *Dadhyan* alone, as it was ordained by *Indra*. According to the story, *Dadhyan* was a great seer who through prayers and meditation happened to please *Indra* so much as to be imparted by him a certain secret knowledge known subsequently as *madhuvidyā*. *Indra*, however, while imparting the knowledge, laid down the condition that the seer would not disclose it upon anybody else, otherwise his head would be cut off. After *Indra* departed from the scene, the *Aśvins* approached *Dadhyan* with the request that he should disclose the knowledge to them. *Dadhyan* told them about the condition *Indra* had laid down in regard to the disclosure of the secret knowledge. The

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16 रथे तिष्ठन् नयति वाजिनः पुरो यत्र यत्र कामयते सुषारथिः।
अभीशूनां महिमानं पनायत मनः पश्चादनुयच्छन्ति रश्मयः।। *RV. VI.75.6.*

17 सुषारथिरश्वानिव यन्मनुष्यान्नेनीयतेऽभीशुभिर्वाजिन इव।
हृत्प्रतिष्ठं यदजिरं जविष्ठं तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु।। *YV. XXXIV.6.*

Aśvins suggested the way out and on *Dadhyan* agreeing to it they replaced *Dadhyan's* head by that of a horse and received the knowledge through that substitute. When *Indra* came to know of it, he rushed to the seer and cut away his head through which he had imparted the knowledge to the *Aśvins*. Subsequently, however, the seer got restored to him his original head by the *Aśvins*.

This story occurs for the first time in the *Bṛhaddevatā* of *Śaunaka* but has scattered references to it in the *Samhitā* itself. Seer *Kakṣīvat* in one of his mantras proposes to disclose the secret how the *Aśvins* got imparted to them the mead through the horse's head.[18] In another mantra he also reveals how the *Aśvins* transplanted the horse's head on the body of *Dadhyan*.[19] In this mantra it has also been pointed out that the mead belonged originally to *Tvaṣṭṛ*, the divine architect of the creation. Its way of imparting has been characterised as one as per the principle of *Ṛta*, *ṛtāyan*. These qualifications are sufficient to suggest that the *madhu vidyā* was concerned with the basic nature of things on account of which the latter became creative as also delightful in their creativity. This interpretation gets confirmed by what the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* has to suggest at the end of its reference to this point of the *Samhitā* through a Rgvedic mantra which observes how Indra, though only one, assumes each and every form in the world by means of his mysterious creative powers and that his original prototypal form responsible for the multiplication of all other forms, therefore, is worth seeing.[20]

Thus horse, in the Veda, symbolises force not only on the physical plane but also on the mental and supramental. Apart from *Aśvamedha*, whose symbolism will be explained separately, this is evident from various references scattered here and there in the *Samhitās*. For instance, at the end of the sole hymn seen by him, seer *Saṁkusuka* explains through allusion to horse how he caught hold of his mantras. He observes that while the day was coming to close, they set him at the root of things like the bird's feather set at the other end of the arrow. Remaining in that position, the seer observes, he caught hold of the Vedic words in the same

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18 तद् वां नरा सनये दंस उग्रमाविष्कृणोमि तन्यतुर्न वृष्टिम्।
दध्यङ् ह यन्मध्वाथर्वणो वामश्वस्य शीर्ष्णा प्र यदीमुवाच।। *RV.I.116.12.*

19 आथर्वणायाश्विना दधीचेऽश्व्यं शिरः प्रत्यैरयतम्।
स वां मधु प्र वोचदृतायन् त्वाष्ट्रं यद्दस्रावपिकक्ष्यं वाम्।। *Ibid., I.117.22.*

20 रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव तदस्य रूपं प्रतिचक्षणाय ।
इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयः शता दश।। *Ibid., VI.47.18.*

way as a horse is held by his reins.[21] Obviously here the struggle does no more relate to the physical plane. It takes place out and out on the spiritual plane where one acts in complete abandonment and yet to his full capability and thus rises to the level of receiving the mantras which, as per the seer's account, is by no mean an easy task. It, as the seer states, is akin to holding the horse by his reins. It is, thus, borne out by this reference, as well as by many others, that the symbol of horse was prone to be used by seers in regard to the highly spiritual task of seeing mantras. In view of this, when a particular seer, *Kāśyapa Asita*, for instance, prays to *Soma*, undergoing the process of purification, to bestow upon him cow and virile horse along with the capability of listening so that he may attain to spiritual power and light, he is not to be taken necessarily, as scholars have usually done, to be aspiring for just cows and horses and thereby name and fame in the society as well as a seat in the heaven.[22] Cow and horse in such cases, at least, are better to be taken as symbolical of something which is in congruence with the attainment of spirituality and light as well as the power of listening to supramental words. Similarly in another mantra seen by god *Indra* himself assuming the form of the human seer *Lava* it is said that since he has taken up *Soma*, the desire has arisen in his mind to win cow and horse.[23] *Indra* has nothing to do with cow and horse. It is equally preposterous, as *Sāyaṇa* has done, to take it in the sense of *Indra* wishing to win cows and horses so as to bestow them upon his devotees, for when he could assume all possible forms in the world by himself, as is evident from the mantra quoted a little earlier at *Footnote No. 20*, where was the necessity of procuring cows and horses from his adversaries so as to redeem himself of the debt of *Soma* he had taken from his devotees? Contrary to all this, what seems to be most likely, is that rising to a state in spirituality co-eval to *Indra's*, the seer experiencing the felicity of the higher beatitude now feels himself in a position to catch hold of mantras symbolised by cow and h rse depending on the basic thrust of meaning of those mantras.

That horse and cow in the Veda are not just the animals but are symbolic of something of deeper significance is borne out by another mantra also

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21 प्रतीचीने मामह्वनीष्वाः पूर्णमिवा दधुः।
प्रतीचीं जग्राभा वाचमश्वं रशनेया यथा।। *Ibid., X.18.14.*

22 पवमान महि श्रवो गामश्वं रासि वीरवत्। सना मेधां सना स्वः।। *Ibid., IX.9.9.*

23 इति वा इति मे मनो गामश्वं सनुयामिति।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति।। *Ibid., X.119.1.*

as seen by *Rebha Kāśyapa*. Whatever horse or cow, which indeed is a part of the eternal, you contemplate, O Indra, observes the seer, put it to the lot of the sacrificer who extracts *Soma* and offers *Dakşiṇa* and by no means should it be allowed to go to the Paṇi.[24] Characterisation of cow and horse as something imperishable suggests that the cow and horse referred to here are by no means the ordinary ones as they are even much more perishable than the humans themselves whose perishability is always uppermost in the mind of the Vedic seer as is borne out by the word *martya* used for them in the Veda so frequently.

That horse, as well as cow in the Veda is closely associated with the felicity of delight generated by *Soma,* is evident, besides others, from a couple of mantras which obviously are highly symbolic in their accounts. They occur in two successive hymns and are seen by *Kakşīvat.* In the first one of them, *Kakşīvat* is said to have received immense wealth from the *Aśvins* in the form of *surā* poured down from pitchers one hundred in number from the hoof of the mighty horse used as the sieve.[25] In the other mantra there is a slight variation on this account., Here it is not *Kakşīvat* himself but the people in general who are beneficiaries of the gift of the *Aśvins*, though the seer is the same, and what is thus poured down upon the people from the horse's hoof is not *surā* but *madhu*, mead.[26] The difference in the details of the two mantras dealing with one and the same theme may have to tell a lot on the nature of these accounts. Use of horse's hoof as a sieve is something fantastic. Equally fantastic is the idea of pouring down one hundred pitchers of the drink, no matter be it *surā* or *madhu,* from a single hoof of a horse, howsoever mighty. In the third place, *surā* and *madhu* are not one and the same thing and yet alternatively both the words have been used to point out to one and the same stuff whatever. Finally, the difference in the beneficiaries of the accounts of the two mantras also cannot be waved out summarily. All these difficulties at least show that out of the horse, the hoof, the *surā*, the *madu* and the beneficiary, none is exactly what it literally denotes.

Just as in the *catvāriśṛnga* mantra neither the horns are the actual horns,

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24 यनि॑न्द्र दधि॒षे त्वमश्वं॒ गां भा॒गमव्ययम्।
यज॑माने सुन्व॒ति दक्षिणावति॒ तस्मि॒न् तं धे॑हि॒ मा प्रण॑ौ।। *Ibid., VIII.97.2*

25 यु॒वं नेरा स्तुव॒ते प॑ञ्चि॒याय कु॒क्षीवं॑ते अरदतं॒ पुरे॑न्धिम्।
का॒रोत॒राच्छ॒फादश्व॑स्य वृष्णः॒ शत॑ं कु॒म्भां अ॑सिञ्चतं॒ सुरा॑याः।। *Ibid.,I.116.7.*

26 तद् वां॑ नरा॒ शंस्यं॑ पञ्चि॒येण कु॒क्षीव॑ता नासत्या॒ परि॑ज्मन्।
श॒फादश्व॑स्य वा॒जिनो॒ जनाय॒ शत॑ं कु॒म्भां अ॑सिञ्चतं॒ मधू॑नाम्।। *Ibid.I.117.6.*

nor are the feet, heads, and hands the real feet, heads and hands, even so here also neither the horse is real horse nor is the hoof the hoof, the *surā* the wine, and the *madu* the real mead. They all suggest to something entirely different from what they actually are, as is the usual case with the symbolic usage. Both beauty and utility of a symbol lie in its essential otherness from what it is meant to symbolise. The kinship on the basis of which it is expected to give an idea of the idea or object it is meant to symbolise, is only a semblance of kinship and by no means any real kinship. The horse's hoof, therefore, if used in the symbolic sense, as definitely it is, must be suggestive of something entirely other than a sieve made of the horse's hoof and used in the purification of *Soma* juice extracted from a particular creeper.

In order to determine the meaning of this peculiar statement, therefore, one needs to go into the details of such usages in the *Samhitā*. In one of *Viśvāmitra's* mantras, for instance, it has been stated that *Indra* found out the mead collected in the cow along with the foot and the hoof as imprinted in the meadow of the cow. That mead is further characterised as mysterious, and hidden in a cave, and waters which, however, out of his generosity he held in his right hand so as to deliver it to deserving ones easily.[27] In this mantra the words *pada* and *śafa* as well as *nama* obviously indicate to tracing the origin of the cow's milk back to the meadow and the cow's grazing in it. All this, however, is symbolic, since otherwise even a child knows that the cow cannot yield milk if she were not given sufficient food by making her graze in the meadow or feeding her with fodder. What the seer really seems to mean is that *Indra* knows the secret how things have been so arranged in the world as to undergo qualitative transformation in course of its process. Just as the grass, when eaten by the cow, assumes the form of milk, so sweet, even so all and sundry objects coming into contact with our senses and the sense-mind, if properly digested and assimilated to the mind, can yield immeasurable delight to the person concerned. Such transformation requires immense understanding and will-power. While cow represents such deeper understanding, horse or indeed the horse's hoof, in this context, symbolises that power of the will by means of which such a transformation is made possible. The horse's hooves are obviously very small as compared to the long distance they cover within no time, making almost the impossible possible by the sheer will of the horse. Even so, a

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27 इन्दो मधु सम्भृतमुस्रियायां पदवद् विवेद शफवन्नमे गोः ।
गुहा हितं गुह्यं गूळ्हमप्सु हस्ते दधे दक्षिणे दक्षिणावान् ।। *Ibid., III.39.6.*

human can attain to utmost felicity of life if he is able to assimilate to his psyche and get harmonised within himself all the sensations he receives from outside by his power of understanding and willing. This is how the *Soma* juice gets purified by passing through the sieve of the horse's hoof, as the seer visualises. Depending on the use of the symbol of fomentation, extraction, collection and harmonisation, one and the same stuff thus prepared may symbolically be called *sura*, *soma* or *madhu*. That indeed is what has happened in the vision of the seer. He in one of his mantras calls what is poured out of the horse's hoof as *sura* while in the other one as *madhu*. Use of the word *kārotara*, sieve, in this context brings in suggestively *Soma* also. As regards the measure of hundred pitchers, that obviously is symbolic of immensity of delight accruing to the person concerned. The latter also, however, has been recounted in a twofold manner. In one of the mantras concerned, it is *Kakşīvat*, the seer himself who is the recipient of the stuff as a great possession while in the other mantra the people in general have been stated as its beneficiaries. However, there does not seem to be any contradiction between the two statements, as it is quite possible that what *Kakşīvat* receives himself initially as a matter of supramental insight, he subsequently delivers the same to people at large. It is indeed owing to such liberal disseminative role played by the seer that the precious insight could come down to us in the form of *madhu-vidyā* via the *Upanişads*, particularly the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*.

Finally, a word is to be added in regard to the distinctive achievements of *Dadhyan* on the one hand and *Kakşīvat* on the other. As the account goes, almost one and the same thing known as mead accrues out of understandably one and the same horse in the cases of both the seers. The difference, however, lies in *Dadhyaṅ* getting it as the word of instruction emanating from the head of the horse while *Kakşīvat* getting it poured from the hoof of the horse. Obviously, while the head stands for cognition, the hoof signifies conation. Horse is an animal who from amongst all the animals known to the Vedic seer, stood at the top in cognition and conation both. If cow stood for spirituality, horse represented intellectuality of the *apriori* intuitive variety. Similarly if bull stood for force as a whole, horse represented the same force, however, in its kinetic operation. Thus, if the word emanating from the horse's head is symbolic of the delight of knowing, the mead or *surā* poured out of the horse's hoof is suggestive of the delight of action. Since the delight is the same in both the cases essentially, it has been brought out by the common symbol of mead by both the seers.

Chariot and Wheel

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Chariot was a commonplace spectacle in ancient India, particularly during the Vedic age. It served as a convenient vehicle during war and peace both. Wars were fought by fighters riding chariots. People were also transported from one place to another by means of them. Chariot races were also held from time to time and were participated in by people en masse. Instead of riding straightaway on the back of the horse, Vedic people seem to have preferred riding the chariot drawn by those horses. The reason is obvious. Since they fought mainly with bow and arrow, which requires use of both the hands, the warriors were obliged to ride chariot instead of the horse's back. In peacetime transportation also, chariot can transport several persons together as against horse's back which, at the most, can have the provision only for two persons. The large plains of northern India also helped a lot in this development.

This spectacle exercised a telling effect on the mind of the seer, particularly as he himself led active life in the society in all possible capacities. Consequently, there are hundreds of references to chariot in the *Samhitās*, some of them coming by way of matter-of-fact description, while the rest by way of simile, metaphor and symbolic representation. Leaving matter-of-fact accounts apart, as they have been already taken due care of by scholars of history and culture, I would like to concentrate on the figurative usages of the chariot in the text.

Needless to point out that *Soma* was a common beverage of the people those days. The prevalence of drinking of *Soma* on the one hand and use of chariot for the ride on the other provided the seer with the proper occasion for recounting the effect of *Soma* on the mind through the spectacle of chariot. In one of his mantras, the seer, thus, observes that being taken up the *Soma* has come to exercise the same sort of control over my mind as the horse exercises on the chariot to which he is yoked.[1] In this figurative account, while horse is used as a simile for *Soma*, chariot gets suggested as the same for the psycho-physical organism, that is the body and the mind combined. In another mantra, however,

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1 उन्मा पीता अयंसत रथमश्वा इवाशवः।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति।। *RV.X.119.3.*

the same *Soma* comes to represent the whole of the carriage including the chariot and the horse both. Here it has been stated that the mighty *Soma* passes through the sieve made of the sheep's wool as a chariot and approaches the destination of unbounded fulfilment like the chariot reaching the point of procurement of nourishments in thousands.[2] *Sāyaṇa* explains *rathāh* here as *ramhana-svabhavah*, one given to moving. Obviously, this interpretation is incapable of taking care of the last part of the mantra indicating to going close to the point of nourishment. Involvement of the image of chariot in such cases, however, is made evident by another mantra of the sort where *Soma* is directly recounted through the simile of chariot in regard to its reaching the stage of abundant fulfilment.[3] Similarly, in another mantra, it has been observed that *Soma*, the creator of the heaven and the earth, has gone acquiring energy like a chariot winning nourishment.[4] It has also been described as laden with wisdom of entire universe just like a mighty war-chariot getting laden with immense wealth.[5] It is probably in view of such telling comparisons and figurative representations of Soma by chariot that the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* observes that although *Soma* is a *rasa*, it has happened to be denoted by the word *ratha*, chariot.[6]

Like *Soma*, *Agni* also has been associated with the imagery of chariot in the Veda. The basis of equation of *Agni* with chariot is the understanding about it as a force. If *Soma* is the principle of liquidity in the universe, *Agni* is the principle of force manifesting itself in the form of both, light and heat. If *Agni*, as light, comes to represent consciousness, it, as heat, forms the source of force and movement of all kinds. Chariot combines both force and movement in it. As such, it has helped the seer a lot in brining out these aspects of *Agni*. In one of his mantras, *Viśvāmitra*, for instance, prays to *Agni* to bring to him energy like a chariot fetching wealth for its owner.[7] Chariot has been a conveyance quite quick in accomplishing the task. On account of the warrior sitting on it, it has also been rather irresistible. By virtue of these qualities also it has been

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2 एष उ स्या वृषा रथोऽव्यो वारेभिरर्षति।
गच्छन्वाजं सहस्रिणम्।। *Ibid., IX.38.1.*

3 स ईं रथो न भरिषाळयोजि महः पुरूणि सातये वसूनि। *Ibid., IX.88.2*

4 प्र हिन्वानो जनिता रोदस्यो रथो न वाजं सनिष्यन्नयासीत्।। *Ibid., IX.90.1.*

5 परि यत्कविः काव्या भरते शूरो न रथो भुवनानि विश्वा। *Ibid., IX.94.3.*

6 तं वा एतं रसं सन्तं रथ इत्याचक्षते। *Gopatha Brah. I.2.21.*

7 रथो न सस्निरभि वक्षि वाजमग्ने। *RV. III.15.5.*

used as a simile to *Agni* again by *Viśvāmitra*. In another mantra, seen by him he, thus, observes that *Agni* is irresistible, marches ahead of all, is quick in its movement and remains ever new like the chariot.[8]

There is also another point of comparison between chariot and *Agni*. It lies in their comprising of several parts. This is particularly truer of chariot, as it is made of several parts, such as the wheel and the body both consisting of several parts each made of planks of wood put together and tied by means of ropes. This make of the chariot is visualised in *Agni* also while recounting it as proceeding towards the heaven as the messenger of mankind to gods. Like a chariot tied at several places for keeping its various parts together, *Agni* along with its red limbs, observes the seer, is moving towards the heaven.[9]

Further, another interesting similarity between chariot and *Agni* is the emergence of both of them equally out of wood. As regards the chariot, it is carved out of wood by labour and skill of the carpenter. Similar labour and skill are involved in producing *Agni* out of wood. Two pieces of wood are taken up and rubbed against each other mightily quite for some time by the application of hands, feet or indeed the whole body before sparks come out of them and then the same sparks are placed in the midst of several pieces of wood so as to ignite the sparks assume the form of a full flame. This fantastic point of similarity between these two entities, otherwise belonging to different classes, was very well noted by the seer as is evident from his prayer to Agni that whatever he has done to the deity by means of his feet, hands and other parts of the body by way of getting him manifested under the guidance of the wise is kindred to the labour of the carpenter engaged in carving the chariot out of wood.[10]

Being so close to *Agni* in the vision of the seer, chariot has come further to symbolise sacrifice itself. In one of his mantras seer *Gṛtsamada* observes that he has yoked early in the morning the chariot which is inclined to winning, is equipped with four yokes, three whips, seven reins, ten cars, is man-friendly, and winner of light and may consequently take to speed

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8 अदाभ्यः पुरएता विशामग्निर्मानुषीणाम्।
तूर्णी रथः सदा नवः।। *Ibid., III.11.5.*

9 रथो न यातः शिक्वभिः कृतो द्यामंगेभिररुषेभिरीयते। *Ibid., I.141.8.*

10 अधा ह यद्वयमग्ने त्वाया पड्भिर्हस्तेभिश्चकृमा तनूभिः।
रथं न क्रान्तो अपसा भुरिजो ऋतं येमुः सुध्य आशुषाणाः।। *Ibid., IV.2.14.*

by means of mantras.[11] In this representation of sacrifice by chariot, the shape of the latter has been considerably altered so as to fulfil the requirements of the thing it seeks to represent. Normally chariot has one yoke, one whip, one or two reins and by no means oars attached to it. But since the object represented by it has kindred things associated with it, the chariot is made to undergo elaborate change in its shape and equipment to the extent of having attached to it four yokes instead of one, three whips instead of one, seven reins instead of one or two and ten oars instead of one required. This exercise of transformation in the shape of the symbol has freely been undertaken by the Vedic seer so as to communicate his idea as closely to the original vision as possible. This we have already seen in the famous image of the fantastic bull having four horns, three feet, two heads and seven hands. Just as in the case of the bull along with horns, feet and head, which are actual parts of the body, though not in the same number as attributed here, the seven hands are incorporated unrealistically, even so in this description of the chariot the seven oars have been brought in unrealistically from the spectacle of boat. This liberty taken by the seer in regard to the shape of the symbolic object testifies to the intensity of his concern for true representation of what he sought to symbolise.

As regards the precise things signified by the four yokes etc., in the sacrifice, the yokes may well be taken as symbolic of the four *rtviks*, the three whips as that of the three pressings, the seven reins as that of the seven metres used in the mantras and the ten oars as representative of the ten bowls used in the sacrifice, though *Sāyaṇa*has also given the alternatives of four pairs of grinding stones and three kinds of sounds, *mandra, madhyama* and *utkrsṭa* in regard to the four yokes and three whips respectively.

So far as equivalence of the symbol and the symbolised idea from the spatial and temporal viewpoints is concerned, obviously there is close temporal affinity between yoking of the chariot and starting the performance of the sacrifice, as both are done sharp early in the morning. Spatially, however, both are entirely dissimilar to each other. While the chariot moves in space and may cover a long distance during the daytime it moves, the sacrifice which it is made to represent is performed at one

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11 प्राता रथो नवो योजि सस्निश्चतुर्युगस्त्रिकशः सप्तरश्मिः।
दशारित्रो मनुष्यः स्वर्षाः स इष्टिभिर्मतिभी रंह्यो भूत।। *Ibid., II.18.1.*

and the same place, notwithstanding all toils and tribulations undergone by *ṛtviks* and the sacrificer. Here the process of performance itself comes to be conceived as movement in space and thus provides for the equivalence between these two so dissimilar acts from this viewpoint. The beauty of symbolisation, along with its utility, lies in inventions of similarity between two objects or processes of mostly dissimilar nature. Such equivalence makes the thing symbolised fascinating and grossly tangible besides opening new perspectives in its understanding.

In connection with the account of ten oars attached to the chariot referred to above, it would be useful to take note of the chariot of the *Aśvins* which they used while going around to render help to *Divodāsa* who had fallen in distress. It is stated in the mantra concerned that the chariot of the *Aśvins* used on that occasion accomplished its task perfectly well and rescued *Divodāsa* safely as the animals yoked to them were such as the bull and the crocodile.[12] Obviously there is least possibility of co-ordination between these two animals, as one of them belongs to land while the other to water. Besides this, while the crocodile will be dangerous to the bull in water, the bull may prove dangerous to the crocodile on land. Moreover, the bull cannot operate in water and the crocodile on land. In spite of all these contradictions and the consequent difficulties, however, the chariot is said to have worked well in rescuing *Divodāsa*. This contradictory state of things in regard to the chariot is, therefore, suggestive of the symbolic character of it. Just as the chariot having four yokes, three whips, seven reins and ten oars is unrealistic and hence symbolic, even so this chariot also, on account of being drawn by the bull and the crocodile, does not remain realistic at all. If it is a chariot, it cannot be drawn by crocodile, and conversely if it is drawn by crocodile, it cannot be a chariot. The solution, therefore, lies in the supposition that either it was a combination of both chariot and boat, or it was something entirely different from both, the chariot and the boat and hence was out and out symbolic, being symbolised by the chariot just on account of the similarity of its operation to that of the chariot.

That this chariot was actually not a chariot at all, is evidently explicit from a mantra addressed to the same *Aśvins* and particularly in regards

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12 यदयातं दिवोदासाय वर्तिर्भरद्वाजायाश्विना हयन्ता।
रेवदुवाह सचनो रथो वां वृषभश्च शिंशुमारश्च युक्ता। *Ibid., I.116.18.*

to their chariot. In this mantra the seer observes that the chariot of the *Aśvins* is immortal and homogeneously yoked and moves in the sea.[13] Besides being inoperative in the sea, the actual chariot cannot be characterised as immortal by the Vedic seer who was so much conscious of the sharp distinction between the mortal and the immortal. This doubt about the actuality of the chariot of gods gets further enhanced by another mantra addressed to the same gods in which it has been stated that the oar of the chariot of the *Aśvins* is larger than the heaven itself while their chariot lies stationed on the fordable points of rivers.[14] The chariot whose oar is larger than the heaven is a chariot neither in shape nor in probability. Similar is the position of the chariot of the *Rbhus*. It has neither horses to draw it, nor reins to control them and yet it takes round of the worlds on its three wheels and it is by riding this chariot that the *Rbhus* give nourishment to the heaven and the earth both.[15]

Thus when we once admit that there is great probability of the accounts of chariot occurring often in the Vedic *Samhitās* not being those of actual chariots but being figurative representation of something entirely different, it becomes imperative on us to look for those things, which the chariot might have been used to represent. One of those secret things represented by chariot, no matter as a simile, metaphor or symbol, is the Vedic mantra. In one of *Vasistha's* mantras, for instance, it has earnestly been desired that the higher divine wisdom may descend on him like a beautifully manufactured mighty chariot.[16]

Obviously chariot is made available to anyone for the sake of his transportation from one place to another. Similar must be the expectation from the mantra descending on the seer from above. This transportation through the mantra would evidently be spiritual. The nature of this transportation also gets suggested by the white colour of the mantra. Like the white horse yoked to the chariot, as recounted by Plato, leading one to the noble path of life, the chariot of the white mantra must bring spiritual elevation to the seer.

Similarly the seer *Nodhā Gautama* observes in one of his visions that he is

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13 समानयोजनो हि वां रथो दस्रावमर्त्यः।
समु॰दे अश्विनेयते।। *Ibid., I.30.18.*

14 अरित्रं वा दिवस्पृथु तीर्थे सिन्धूनां रथः। *Ibid., I.46.8.*

15 अनश्वो जातो अनभीशुरुक्थ्यो रथस्त्रिच॰क्रःपरि वर्तते रजः। *Ibid., IV.36.1.*

16 प्र शु॰कैतु देवी मनीषा अस्मत्सुतष्टो रथो न वाजी। *Ibid., VII.34.1.*

bringing out a group of mantras from within himself for the sake of *Indra* like an artisan presenting a chariot to his master.[17] Another *Rgvedic* seer *Parucchepa*, likewise, observes how mortals have created mantras concerned for *Indra's* sake like the efficient artisan manufacturing the chariot.[18] As a matter of fact, this imagery of the chariot was so favourite to the Vedic seer particularly in connection with the composition of the mantra that it has been used by many a seer including *Parucchepa, Ātreya, Viśvāmitra* and *Vāmadeva.*

In these cases, however, just a similitude has been created between the composition of the mantra and the manufacturing of the chariot particularly in view of some sort of akinness between the two acts in regard to involvement of utmost care and skill as also kindred utility of them for transportation, though with colossal difference in the nature of the transportations, one being physical while the other spiritual. There is a mantra seen by *Gṛtsamada,* however, in which what is actually described in kindred words is only the chariot but what gets suggested by those words, is really the mantra. "*Protect our chariot, O Mitra and Varuṇa, along with the Adityas, Rudras and Vasus,*" prays the seer, "*of course, as birds which flew from their abode out of their desire to listen to something as also out of excessive joy, though sitting in the midst of foliage of trees.*"[19] Obviously what seems to be the real burden of the mantra is the protection of the mantra by different groups of gods such as *Mitra* and *Varuṇa, Adityas, Rudras* and *Vasus* while the chariots' venture has been brought out by means of the image of birds flying from their abode for the sake of hearing something interesting as well as out of excessive joy. But in view of the seer's tendency to make out something regarding the mantra through the simile of the chariot, it is quite likely that he is using chariot here independently as a symbol of mantra or rather group of mantras, which in the second part of the mantra gets disclosed in the garb of birds flying from their comfortable nests just out of curiosity and joy. *Prof. Windisch*, therefore, as referred to by *Griffith* in the footnote to his translation of the mantra, shows great understanding in taking the chariot here in the sense of `*hymn of praise'*. Flight of the bird out of joy and curiosity is indeed a better expression for the evocation of mantras

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17 अस्मा इदु स्तोमं सं हिनोमि रथं न तष्टेव तत्सिनाय। *Ibid., I.61.4.*

18 इमां ते वाचं वसूयन्त आयवो रथं न धीरः।
स्वपा अतक्षिषुः सुम्नाय त्वामतक्षिषु।। *Ibid., I.130.6.*

19 अस्माकं मित्रावरुणावतं रथमादित्यैरुर्दैर्वसुभिः सचाभुवा।
प्र यद् वयो न पप्तन् वस्मनस्परि श्रवस्यवो हृषीवन्तो वनर्षदः।। *Ibid.,II.31.1.*

than manufacturing or movement of chariot. It is this excellence of the symbol of the bird, which has impelled the seer to make use of it in supersession of the chariot which, more or less, was already symbolic of the same mantras. The plurality of birds in juxtaposition to the singularity of chariot is also suggestive of the symbolic character of the latter. This is how the Vedic seer is prone to place one symbol within the other so as to generate deeper insight into the subject he wants to bring home to the reader. While chariot brings out the skill and wisdom involved in the composition of the mantra as also the latter's utility in the psychic transformation of the seer concerned, symbol of birds flying from their comfortable nests just out of joy and curiosity suggests the cognitive depth and affective intensity of the state of psyche resulting in spontaneous overflow of mantras.

The symbol of chariot has been accorded to celestial bodies and spectacles also several times obviously with a view to offering explanation for their movement as well as the purpose behind the movement. In one of *Kakṣīvat's* mantras, for instance, it has been observed that the massive chariot of goddess *Uṣas* has been yoked and the immortal gods have been made to sit on it and that the noble goddess has emerged out of darkness with a view to providing succour to human settlements.[20] Obviously the dawn moves from the bottom of the horizon to the sky upward bringing light to the world otherwise engulfed in darkness. Since she moves and does something beneficial to the people, she is supposed to be moving on a chariot with a view to removing the darkness, which in itself is symbolic of evil and ignorance. The darkness, as if, were a disease which the goddess is seeking to cure through her illumination. It is this consideration of darkness as a malady requiring its cure through light which eventually gets crystallised in the *Upaniṣad* in the form of the famous formula: "*Lead me from untruth to truth; lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality.*"[21] As a matter of fact, movement from darkness to light as well as from untruth to truth and from mortality to immortality is not necessarily a movement at all, since it is out and out a state of sensory and spiritual transformation. And yet, it has been described clearly as a movement. Similar is the case with *Uṣas* described

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20 पृथू रथो दक्षिणाया अयोज्यैनं देवासो अमृतासो अस्थुः।
कृष्णादुदस्थादर्या विहायाश्चिकित्सन्ती मानुषाय क्षयाय।। *Ibid., I.123.1.*

21 असतो मा सद् गमय।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय।। *Brh.Up.I.3.28.*

as riding a chariot with a view to curing the malady of darkness afflicting the people. She is supposed to be moving from door to door in human settlements on her chariot curing their malady of darkness. Had her movement not been accorded the form of a moving chariot, it could not have been made purposive and thus spiritual in its intent. Symbolic representation of even barely external nature in the Veda accords it a deeply spiritual character. Or, to put it otherwise, the symbolic representation of the phenomena of nature in the Veda has its root in deep spiritual experience of the seer.

This is as much true of the sun also. In one of *Bharadvāja's* mantras, the sun itself has been conceived as a chariot equipped, among other things, with seven reins. By the number of the reins is also suggested the number of horses yoked to this chariot of the sun.[22] As regards the agency responsible for yoking this cosmic chariot that has been identified here as *Soma,* it is stated further in the mantra that it is this *Soma* which has placed the heaven and the earth apart from each other so as to make the movement of the sun as a chariot possible between them. This account invests the whole spectacle of the world with a definite spiritual re-orientation under which the cosmos has been created with a certain purpose in view.

This purpose has been specified in one of *Atri's* mantras as the maintenance of *Dharman* or *Ṛta* by *Mitra* and *Varuṇa.* Being endowed with supernal wisdom, they are seeing to it that the principles of *Rta* are fully operative in the universe for the maintenance of its equipoise. It is as a part of this broader objective that they, the mantra states, have placed the sun in the heaven as a brilliant chariot.[23] It is interesting to note that in this mantra *Sūrya* has been described as the chariot and not the charioteer, as was the case with *Uṣas.* Understandably it is *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* who play the role of the charioteer in this vision of the cosmic spectacle. Thus, it is obvious that *Mitra,* who is generally taken to be nothing but the sun, is not really the sun but the controller of it, if conceived as a chariot. So is the case with *Varuṇa.* He is generally taken as the god of night and hence closely associated with the moon. If that were the whole truth, he could not have been taken, along with *Mitra,* as

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22 अयं द्यावापृथिवी विष्कभायदयं रथमयुनक्सप्तरश्मिम्। । *RV. VI.44.24.*

23 धर्मणा मित्रावरुणा विपश्चिता व्रता रक्षेथे असुरस्य मायया।
ऋतेन विश्वं भुवनं वि राजयः सूर्यमाधत्थः दिवि चित्र्यं रथम्। । *Ibid., V.63.7.*

the controller of the sun. They indeed are the supernal emanations of *Ṛta*, the principle of cosmic creation, progression and co-ordination and as such the locomotion of the sun as a chariot is a small part of their cosmic action. In this part of the universe, however, it is this action of theirs which is responsible for preparing the proper climate for the emergence and sustenance of life. In this way, this can be taken as the purpose behind the movement of the sun, as the chariot. This is how we can understand the seer's purpose behind symbolisation of the solar orb as a chariot.

The significance of this act of symbolisation can better be understood by comparing it with the mode of thinking of the modern cosmologist in this regard. Notwithstanding all his painstaking effort at threadbare analysis of the universe, he until now has found it as absolutely value-neutral having nothing to offer to us as the aim, objective and meaning of life in this vast expanse of time and space with an inestimably large number of heavenly bodies rolling in it at stupendous velocities and countless creatures of varied shapes and sizes on the earth itself struggling hard for self-preservation and promotion. Consequently he has not been able to establish any co-ordination between the macrocosmic extensity and the microcosmic intensity of feeling and aspiration. It bears out a definite gap and flaw in the fundamentals of his approach to things universal as well as individual. This crucial gap in his thinking has no place in the vision of the Vedic seer where the space intermediate to the heaven and the earth has been conceived as the passage for the movement of the chariot of the sun taking its round regularly to see that things go on perfectly well as per the provisions of the principle of *Ṛta*. The symbolism of the chariot used for the cosmological scenario accounts well for the dynamics of the heavenly bodies as represented eminently by the sun and at the same time invests the dynamics with a certain purpose.

The seer, however, has gone still deeper into the matter by extending the symbolism of chariot from the solar orb to the yearly cycle of time formed by its movement. Addressing the mantra to *Soma* and *Pūṣan*, the seer *Gṛtsamada* observes that they have set moving a chariot, which encompasses the entire spectacle of the universe and yet stands even beyond it, has seven wheels attached to it, is covered from all sides, is provided with five reins and is yoked with the mind.[24] *Sāyaṇa* explains

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24 सोमापूषणा रजसो विमानं सप्तच॰कं रथमविश्वमिन्वम्।
विषूवृतं मनसा युज्यमानं तं जिन्वथो वृषणा पञ्चरश्मिम्।। *Ibid., II.40 3.*

the seven wheels as symbolic of the seven seasons including the one formed by addition of one month each third year by way of creating equivalence between the lunar and the solar calendars. He explains the five reins also in terms of five seasons of the year, the sixth namely *Hemanta* being assimilable to *Śiśira*. This duplicity in the counting of seasons itself betrays the inadequacy of his explanation. Moreover such significantly different items as wheel and rein cannot be taken to have been symbolised by the seer by one and the same thing, *i.e.*, the seasons. Postponing further consideration on this point for the time being owing to paucity of evidence, however, when we take note of the two last features of the chariot, we cannot but be surprised by the depth of understanding of the seer. As a whole, this chariot seems to be a symbolic representation of the entire spectacle of the spatio-temporal expanse. If so, characterisation of this system as covered from all around reveals the boundedness of the universe as envisioned by the seer. In this context, it would be interesting to remind ourselves of the modern scientific view on the subject. According to Einstein's theory of relativity, which of course holds the sway today, the universe is finite but unbounded. This obviously is a contradiction in terms. Anything, which is finite, cannot be unbounded, if, of course, the definition of boundedness applied is not inadequate in itself. Since the universe is supposed to have existed prior to the singularity of the big bang, from which itself time-space continuum is supposed to have begun its role, the universe is taken to have an opening on that side. Similarly, no scientific theory as yet could be formulated regarding the point at which the universe may be supposed to collapse totally. Here also, thus, it is free of boundary. All this obviously is due to incapability of science to determine the boundary of the universe, rather than due to total lack of boundary itself which is responsible for presenting this antithetical position of unbounded finiteness before the scientist. Otherwise, as a matter of the universally valid principle of reasoning, whatever is finite, must have a beginning, and whatever has the beginning, must meet an end too. The beginning and the end in time in themselves are as valid ingredients of boundary as the spatial one, which too cannot escape finitude. As against this, the *Rgvedic* seer considers the cosmic chariot as bounded from all sides, as is the logical necessity of anything finite. To conceive of this product of the spatio-temporal co-ordination as a chariot reveals its dynamism as realised by the seer. Moreover, characterisation of this chariot as 'yoked by mind', *manasa yujyamanam*, vindicates its being controlled by some

mind obviously much higher and comprehensive than ours. This attribute explains well the universe obeying the laws emerging in mind provided there is self-consistency and universality in those laws.

Horse, reins, wheel and hub are the important components of chariot. There are variations in the number of each of these components in the text. In the mantra quoted right now, the number of wheels attached to the chariot is given as seven, while those of the reins as five. However, there is another mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* in which the number of horses is seven while that of wheel is only one. But, at the same time, therein it has also been stated that the number of horses as seven is just in name while the horse is only one bearing seven names. Conversely, in regard to the wheel it has been said that though it is only one, it is being rotated on as many as three hubs.[25] *Sāyaṇa* explains *ekacakram* as *ekacarinam*, that which moves all alone. When the whole mantra bases its vision on the chariot itself so elaborately, it is unfair to the chariot to dilute its meaning by explaining it away as `moving all alone'. Further, he takes `*ekah aśvah*' in the sense of the sun while the seven names as signifying the seven rays of the sun. Finally, he explains *trināhi cakram* as signifying the year along with its three seasons, *i.e.*, the summer, the rainy and the winter.

The problem with this explanation, however, is that it at its best remains confined only to the sun and the earth, whereas in the text what has been stated is that this chariot forms the abode of creation in all its multiplicity. The wheel of the chariot is also characterised as un-ageing and constant. None of these characteristics applies to the sun. The sun cannot be supposed to have within its ambit the entire world. It is just a part of the universe, though a prominent one. Moreover, the phenomenon of the three seasons relates only to this earth. How can it be taken to form the hub of the cosmic process, as it is stated to do in the mantra.

In view of these so serious difficulties with *Sāyaṇa's* explanation, it is necessary to search for the explanation of the mantra, particularly in these respects, somewhere else. While conceiving of any such explanation what obviously is to be kept in mind is the cosmicity of the symbol of chariot, since it is stated unambiguously to be the mainstay of creation. That frame of reference within which everything else in the universe is so

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25 सप्त युञ्जन्ति रथमेकच॰कमेको अश्वो वहति सप्तनामा।
त्रिनाभि च॰कमजरमनर्वं यत्रेमा विश्व भुवनानि तस्थुः।। *Ibid., I.,164.2.*

well contained as a load on chariot, can very well be suggested as the space-time. Interestingly enough, exactly this space-time has been recounted in the *Atharvaveda* in detail as the cosmic chariot bearing everything else in the universe as its load or indeed product. In the mantra under consideration, time has directly been stated as the horse pulling the chariot of the cosmos. Pinning down on this basic point, let us try to understand the rest of the symbolism involved in this account as well as that of the Rgvedic mantras.

In the Atharvavedic hymn, the horse of time has been described as being controlled by seven reins, which varies slightly from the Rgvedic account where their number is put as five. As per another Rgvedic mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas*, however, there is very eminent possibility of this number going to seven, as the same is the number of horses given there as yoked to the chariot, no matter nominally, as the mantra observes, *eko aṣvo saptanama*. This figure, therefore, may be taken to relate to the seven grades of being indicated by the seven *vyāhṛtis* subsequently. If so, the Rgvedic account of one horse assuming the form of seven horses or working in name at least as seven horses can very well be explained as the same horse of time assuming the form of seven horses while drawing the chariot at respective planes. Needless to point out that time moves differently on different planes of being. In view of the difference in movement, therefore, the one and the same horse can be taken as moving in a seven-fold manner, form or names.

The horse of time in the *Atharvaveda* has been described as having one thousand axles attached to his chariot. In contrast to it, the number of axles given in *Dīrghatamas'* mantra is three. This difference is due to difference in the perspective in what we regard as axle of the cosmic chariot. If we take the distinct successive steps in the march of time as the axle of the cosmic chariot, we may very well count them as three in the form of the past, the present and the future. This is perhaps the viewpoint taken in the vision of *Dīrghatamas*. If, on the other hand, we regard as axle the individual beings living in the world, each one of whom is prone to consider himself or herself as the centre of the creation, this chariot may fairly well be taken to move on countless axles, as has been envisioned by seer *Bhṛgu* in the *Atharvaveda*. Or, otherwise, since the creation consists of numberless universes, as is being surmised by the astrophysicist today, the figure *'thousand axles'* may very well refer to that multiplicity of the universes.[1] *Bhṛgu*, however, further in the second mantra of the hymn, reverts to the concept of seven wheels and to as many axles and then to the central axle of immortality and characterises time as the first one of the gods.[2] The axle of immortality of the *Atharvaveda* explains well why the cosmic wheel recounted in the *Rgvedic* mantra has been characterised as *'un-aging and constant'*. The idea of eternal constancy of the cosmic chariot or at least what this chariot is envisioned as carrying on it as the precious load, has further been described by *Bhṛgu* in the *Atharvaveda* as a filled pitcher of immortality waiting to be made available to each and everyone in the world. It is, indeed, out of this eternal reservoir of immortality that creation has proceeded through the chain of father and son and ultimately it is to this reservoir that it has to return, since the reservoir is exerting its attraction on it from above, facing each and every individual living in it.[3]

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1 कालो अश्वो वहति सप्तरश्मिः सहस्राक्षो अजरो भूरिरेताः।
तमा रोहन्ति कवयो विपश्चितस्तस्य चक्रा भुवनानि विश्वा।। *Atharvaveda XIX.53.1*

2 सप्त चक्रान् वहति काल एष सप्तास्य नाभीरमृतं न्वक्षः।
स इमा विश्वा भुवनान्यञ्जत् कालः स ईयते प्रथमो नु देवः।। *Ibid., XIX.53.2.*

3 पूर्णः कुम्भोऽधि काल आहितस्तं वै पश्यामो बहुधा नु सन्तः।
स इमा विश्वा भुवनानि प्रत्यङ् कालं तमाहुः परमे व्योमन्।।
स एव सं भुवनान्याभरत् स एव सं भुवनानि पर्येत्।
पिता सन्नभवत् पुत्र एषां तस्माद् वै नान्यत् परमस्ति तेजः।। *Ibid., XIX.53.3-4.*

Besides the above ideas, which are so well explanatory of the symbolism of the cosmic chariot so many times referred to in the Veda, the Atharvavedic vision of *Bhṛgu* provides us with the clue to the understanding of the basic psychology behind the origin and possibility of this symbolism. According to the seer, the totality of the reality in all its dynamics and constancy or perishability and immortality can be visualised all at once in one vision as a chariot having time to draw it as the horse and being laden with the pitcher of immortality placed at the centre of the chariot, to be tasted only by those wise and supremely intelligent seers who have the capacity to feel as if they are riding this chariot along with the possibility of separating themselves from it as and when they consider it to be appropriate and necessary. In fact, it is only when the whole world would have directly been experienced and not just inferred as moving like a wheel around the axle of immortality or as a chariot laden with immortality that such symbolic vision as this could have emerged.

By the way, it may be mentioned here that it is this view of time taken by seer *Bhṛgu* from that high pedestal of the totality of the cosmic existence which has resulted in the conception and actualisation of the well known *Bhṛgu Saṁhitā* which is supposed to have recorded in it the life-history of each and every individual whosoever existing anywhere in the cosmos in all its past, present and future revealed together as a matter of the present moment. This could obviously be possible owing to the togetherness of the entire temporal perspective in the eye of the seer sitting on the chariot of space-time and seeing from closest quarters how the ephemeral is emerging constantly out of the Eternal.

This chariot has elsewhere been conceived as belonging to *Ṛta*. It is characterised as luminous, terrible, suppresser of enemies, killer of *Rākṣasas*, rescuer of cows and gainer of the supernal light. *Bṛhaspati* is one of the gods who is sitting on this chariot. Sitting on this chariot, *Bṛhaspati* is prayed to ward off those who spread rumour and confusion as well as darkness.[4] Darkness is the symbol of ignorance while rumour signifies half-truth. *Rākṣasas* and enemies are forces of darkness working against the interest of homogeneous cosmic progression while cow and light symbolise sustenance, knowledge and illumination.

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4 आ विबाध्या परिरापस्तमांसि च ज्योतिष्मन्तं रथमृतस्य तिष्ठसि।
बृहस्पते भीममभित्रदम्भनं रक्षोहणं गोत्रभिदं स्वर्विदम्।। *RV. II.23.3.*

All this, therefore, is expected to have been achieved through this grand idea of the cosmos conceived as a chariot and seated in by *Bṛhaspasti*, the Lord of mantras. The same chariot, however, is also said to be seated in by *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* and is described by seer *Kakşīvat* as spacious in form, luminous in reins and brilliant as the sun.[5] Understandably it is the same chariot which has been described by *Kutsa Āṅgirasa* as most brilliant and observer of the entire universe and as seated in by *Indra* and *Agni*.[6] In fact, each and every god and goddess is supposed to be seated in this chariot of *Ṛta* and be seeing to it that the universe is running well on the principles laid down by *Ṛta*, the dynamics of the Eternal. That this chariot in essence is divine, is evident from various mantras putting the same idea in several ways. In one of *Medhātithi Kaṇva's* mantras, for instance, it has been observed that the reins, the whip, the chariot and the two horses are made of the same stuff as you, O *Indra*.[7] Indeed, it is on the basis of the viewpoint taken in such mantras that *Yāska* has come to formulate the view that not only all the gods and goddesses are formulations made out of the self-same Reality but their chariot, the horse yoked to the chariot, the weapon or in fact everything related to the chariot is the formulation of that Reality.[8]

Since the chariot of the Divine symbolising the cosmos in its all-encompassing movement is the dynamics of *Ṛta*, inclusive of all movements whatever in it, it has been characterised as faster than mind even, as is evident from the mantra: *"Your chariot, O Aśvins, which moves faster than mind and has well trained horses yoked to it, and which reaches all people whosoever, and by means of which you go to the house of doers of good deeds, by that chariot, O Leaders, come round to us."*[9] How the seer seeks to concretise things through images drawn from his surroundings notwithstanding the limitations that he brings to his otherwise highly much more comprehensive ideas, is evident from

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5 रथो॑ वां मित्रावरुणा दी॒र्घाप्सा॒ः स्यू॒मगभस्ति॒ः सूरो॒ नाद्यौ॑त्। *Ibid., II.122.15.*

6 य इ॑न्द्राग्नी चि॒त्रत॑मो॒ रथो॑ वाम॒भि विश्वा॑नि॒ भुव॑नानि॒ चष्टे॑।
तेनाया॑तं स॒रथं॑ तस्थि॒वांसाथा॒ सोम॑स्य पिबतं सु॒तस्य॑। । *Ibid., I.108.1.*

7 वृष॑णस्ते अ॒भीश॑वो॒ वृषा॒ कशा॑ हिर॒ण्ययी॑।
वृषा॒ रथो॑ मघव॒न् वृष॑णा॒ हरी॒ वृषा॒ त्वं श॑तक्रतो। । *Ibid., VIII.33.11.*

8 एकस्य आत्मनः अन्ये देवाः प्रत्यंगानि भवन्ति। इतरेतरप्रकृतयः । आत्मैव एषां रथो भवति। आत्मा अश्वः। आत्मा आयुधम्। आत्मा इषवः। आत्मा सर्व देवस्य देवस्य। *Nirukta VII.4.*

9 यो वां॑शिवना॒ मन॑सो॒ जवी॑यान् रथः॒ स्वश्वो॒ विश॑ आ॒ जिगा॑ति।
येन॒ गच्छ॑थः सु॒कृतो॑ दुरो॒णं तेन॑ नरा व॒र्तिर॒स्मभ्यं॑ यातम्। । *RV.I.117.2.*

another mantra addressed to the same *Aśvins* and bearing reference to their chariot particularly to its speed. The same seer *Kakṣīvat* who in the previously quoted mantra described the chariot of the *Aśvins* as faster than mind, and who in this mantra also characterises it again as faster than the mortal's mind, in the very same mantra side by side once more describes it as speedy like eagle and still further as wind.[10] Needless to point out that the velocity of air and more so that of eagle is nothing as compared to that of mind. In spite of full cognisance of this fact, however, if the seer brings in the similes of air and eagle that obviously is with a view to giving concrete shape to his ideas, though immensely much broader in perspective than what the proposed similes could at their best bring out. The reference to the speed of mind, and that of wind and eagle, therefore, is just a device to give an idea, both abstractly and concretely, of the dynamics of *Ṛta* whose sheer localised reformulations on different planes of existence serve as the velocity of light as understood by the modern scientist and that of mind as has been known to mankind since long. Since the chariot of gods is imbued with that original dynamics of *Ṛta, ṛtajā*, it takes round of the heaven and the earth within a moment.[11]

While, on the one hand, the symbolism of chariot has been used in regard to gods on the cosmic scale particularly with respect to their movement and action, it, on the other, has also been employed in regard to sphere of action of the individual human being, with reference particularly to his body. Thus, if, on the one hand, the sphere of action of gods has been brought out figuratively as a chariot representing the dynamics of *Ṛta*, the same symbol on the other, has been taken to the level of the individual human being by conceiving of his body as a chariot. In this respect, there are certain instances of use of the image of chariot as a simile to the human body. For instance, there is a mantra seen by *Kakṣīvat* in which there is a reference to the body of one *Vandana* which had become wholly emaciated due to old age and was restored to its youthfulness by the *Aśvins* like a tattered chariot having been repaired to good working condition.[12] Similarly, there is another instance in which old *Cyavana* was restored to youth by the same *Aśvins* like an old chariot repaired to proper moving condition.[13]

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10 आ वां रथो अश्विना श्येनपत्वा सुमृळीकः स्ववां यात्वर्वाङ्।
यो मर्त्यस्यमनसो जवीयान् त्रिवन्धुरो वृषणा वातरंहाः।। *Ibid., I.118.1*

11 रथो ह वामृतजा अद्रिजूतः परि द्यावापृथिवी याति सद्यः। *Ibid., III.58.8.*

12 युवं वन्दनं निर्ऋतं जरण्यया रथं न दस्रा करणा समिन्वथः। *Ibid., I.119.7.*

13 युवं च्यवानं सनयं यथा रथं पुनर्युवानं चरथाय तक्षथुः।। *Ibid., X.39.4.*

This sort of equation of the body with the chariot, however, has been brought to the level of symbolic usage particularly in the dialogue between *Yama* and the *Kumāra* in a whole *Ṛgvedic* hymn. Here *Yama* sitting high in the midst of dense foliage grown on the tree of creation and taking drink in the company of gods happens to ask the *Kumāra* regarding the chariot which he was riding at the moment. This chariot has been described by him as new, wheel-less, created by mind, one- poled and yet moving in all directions and be inhabited without seeing so.[14] This chariot, further, is said to have been brought in the presence of *Yama* from the sages, and is described as being followed by *Sāman* mantras and to be placed now on a boat.[15] Further it has been inquired as to who has created the *Kumāra* in the form of the chariot and has made it roll away as also who is to suggest how this chariot could be sent back to the place it has come from.[16] Again it is stated in the next mantra that this child-chariot was born first and then came to the advantageous position of delivering the good. Thus, there was a firm foundation laid down first and then was prepared the way out behind him.[17]

Obviously in this allegorical account, the human body has been symbolised by the chariot constructed so skilfully as to have surprised even *Yama*, the Lord of the Dead, when it reached him having crossed over the world of mortals. Developing the human personality in the world of mortals is laying the broad foundation for sustaining the colossal development upwards so as to reach the height of the world of *Yama*. In other words, it is the skilful and careful construction of the chariot of human personality which can make the travel to that world safe and sound. It is only when the chariot of the human body or personality becomes capable of reaching the world of *Yama* that it can hope to find the way out of the drudgery of the world. It is this central idea which gets elaborated subsequently in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* with the invention of the name of *Vājaśravas* as the father of the *Kumāra* happening to be named as *Naciketas*.

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14 यं कुमार वनं रथमचक्रं मनसाकृणोः।
एकेषं विश्वतः प्राञ्चमपश्यन्नधितिष्ठसि।। *Ibid., X.135.3.*

15 यं कुमारं प्रावर्तयो रथं विप्रेभ्यस्परि।
तं सामानुप्रावर्तत सप्तितो नाव्याहितम्।। *Ibid., X.135.4.*

16 कः कुमारमजनयद्रथं को निरवर्तयत्।
कः स्वित् तदद्य नौ ब्रूयादनुदेयी यथाभवत्।। *Ibid., X.135.5.*

17 यथाभवदनुदेयी ततो अग्रमजायत।
पुरस्ताद् बुध्न आततः पश्चान्निरयणं कृतम्।। *Ibid., X.135.6.*

As regards the symbolism of the chariot involved in the Rgvedic hymn, it too is brought out in an eloquently elaborate form in the famous Upaniṣadic allegory of the chariot in which, exactly as per the provisions of the hymn, the human body is considered as a chariot, the intellect as the charioteer, *manas* as the rein, organs as horses, objects of sense as the path and *Atman* as the owner of the chariot.[18] As the *Upaniṣad* tells us, it was only after *Naciketas* had reached the abode of *Yama* that with the exercise of discretion and restraint over his lesser desires he could find the final way out of mortality in the form of the highest footstep of *Viṣṇu*. This what is called *nirayaṇa*, the way out, in the Vedic hymn.

Thus, we see how the body of the young child comes to be symbolised in the hymn as the `new chariot' shorn of wheel having only one pole and yet being capable of moving all around. As a carrier of the soul, the body indeed is a chariot but wheel-less. In view of the provision of the eyes only on one side, this bodily chariot is correctly described as one-poled but on account of the capability of the body to move in any direction easily, the chariot symbolising it has naturally been described as prone to move in all directions.

The idea of taking the body as a chariot with the soul being always separable from it; is too subtle to come to the reach of everybody without proper initiation into the related wisdom. This idea was mooted out by no less a figure than *Yama* himself. *Naciketas*, otherwise, was completely ignorant of it. It is on this account that *Yama* tells the *Kumāra* that he is ignorant of this truth. When, however, the latter came to grasp the wisdom involved in this allegory, he found the way out. This is how the basic message of the *Upaniṣad* was already compressed symbolically within the short span of a few figurative expressions of the Vedic seer.

Along with the chariot, its wheel also plays a vital role in the symbolisation of subtle ideas in the Veda. Use of this symbol has many times been made in regard to the solar orb and its movements. In connection with *Sūrya's* marriage to the *Aśvins,* for instance, the question has been raised as to the whereabout of the third wheel of the chariot used by the *Aśvins* in reaching *Sūrya.* At the first instance, it has been

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18 आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च।।
इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयास्तेषु गोचरान्।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः।। *Katha Up. III.3-4.*

stated that the chariot used by them in reaching her had three wheels.[19] But in the immediately ensuing mantra the query has been put regarding the place where the third wheel of the chariot used on the occasion of that marriage was as also where they had stationed themselves.[20] As an answer to the query regarding the whereabouts of the third wheel, however, it has been stated in the next mantra that while two of the wheels were known to Brahmins in general, the third mysterious one was known only to those among them who knew things with greater precision.[21] Now the question is as to what the two wheels known explicitly to Brahmins were and what in particular was the third one known only to very few men of higher knowledge.

Sāyaṇa in his commentary on these mantras identifies the two wheels known to Brahmins in the form of the sun and the moon. Needless to point out that the sun and the moon are quite commonplace spectacles visible from the earth. Each and everyone, if, of course, not blind, sees them moving in the sky alternately. But to conceive of them as wheels of a certain chariot, speeding through space is a rather difficult proposition. This difficulty gets enhanced several times by the alternate appearance of these luminaries, as against the simultaneous working of the wheels of the chariot. Obviously, therefore, even the two-wheeled chariot is not an ordinary one. It is a chariot with one wheel of it working in the daytime the other one working at night. Moreover, there are occasions when the night-time wheel is not there in the sky at all. How could, then, the chariot move at night in the absence of the wheel supposed to work at night? Any two-wheeled chariot with irregular working of one of its wheels cannot move at all. In view of this difficulty involved in *Sāyaṇa's* suggestion, it seems more likely that what the seer has really intended by the two wheels of the chariot known to Brahmins are not so much the sun and the moon as the day and night themselves. If so, the chariot of the *Aśvins* undergoes radical transformation. It does not remain merely the heavenly spectacle in which two prominent heavenly bodies such as the sun and the moon go across the firmament alternately but assumes the form of the chariot of time moving on the wheels of day and night. It is

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19 यदश्विना पृच्छमानावयातं त्रिचक्रेण वहतुं सूर्यायाः। *RV.X.85.14.*

20 यदयातं शुभस्पती वरेयं सूर्यामुप।
क्वैकं चक्रं वामासीत् क्व देष्ट्राय तस्थुः।। *Ibid., X.85.15.*

21 द्वे ते चक्रे सूर्ये ब्रह्माणं ऋतुथा विदुः।
अथैकं चक्रं यद् गुहा तदद्धातय इद्विदुः।। *Ibid., X.85.16.*

due to this subtleness of ideation involved in the conception of the chariot along with its two wheels that it is said to be known only to Brahmins. Whereas the visual spectacle is a matter of commonplace perception and experience, the envisagement of the chariot of time with day and night as its wheels involves subtle ideation and highly developed imagination for its proper symbolisation. This is why the seer has observed that even the two-wheeled chariot is known only to Brahmins.

The real difficulty, however, lies with the understanding of the third wheel. According to *Sāyaṇa*, this secret wheel of the chariot of the *Aśvins* is to be understood in the form of the duration of the year, *samvatsarātmakam*. This interpretation accords better with the suggestion made above that the two other wheels of the chariot are day and night rather than the sun and the moon as is taken by *Sāyaṇa*, since they uniformly signify different units or components of time. As regards the obviousness of the two wheels and secretness of the third one, that also is understandable on account of opaqueness of the round of year in contrast to the self-evident clarity of day and night. In fact, identification of the beginning and end of year must have been a great problem with mankind and could have remained so even until now but for the efforts of astronomers, the earliest one in the recorded history being the Vedic seer himself, particularly *Dīrghatamas* who has given a lot of information bearing out his cognisance of the precise duration of the year along with those of months and fortnights as well as the number of days in a year.

All this, the seer has clothed in the symbolism of the wheel. He very mysteriously recounts how there is a wheel whose circumference consists of twelve fellies and in which there are as many as three axles besides three hundred and sixty spokes attached to it.[22] Obviously the wheel is symbolic of the year, while the axles stand for seasons, the fellies for months and the spokes for the number of days the year comprises of. Regarding this symbolic figure also the seer delights in throwing the challenge as to anyone daring to decode it. It is evident from his challenge that he is fully conscious of the symbolic nature of his account and hence of the difficulties involved in de-symbolising it. If he takes resort to it, even in full cognisance of the difficulties involved in the understanding of this sort of account, that evidently is due to high suggestiveness of this sort of expression inasmuch as it ties together closely the visible with the

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22 द्वादश प्रधयश्चक्रमेकं त्रीणि नभ्यानि क उ तच्चिकेत।
तस्मिन्त्साकं त्रिशता न शंकवोऽर्पिताः षष्टिर्न चलाचलासः।। *Ibid., I.164.48.*

invisible creating thus a bridge of understanding between the known and the unknown, which is the actual function of the symbolic way of expression. When the duration of the year comes to form the wheels of the chariot which are constantly mobile in contrast to space as its body, automatically there arises the question in regard to the horses, the charioteer and the owner of the chariot sitting on it and intending to reach a certain destination. Thus, the symbolism of the wheel, when once fabricated, gives rise to a series of queries leading eventually to the organisation of various otherwise unconnected spectacles of life and the world within a system.

In this connection, it would be interesting to note how *Dīrghatamas* expatiates further on the symbolism of wheel by describing it in another mantra as one having its circumference and axle held together by twelve spokes and indwelt by sons of *Agni* seven hundred twenty in number and grouped in pairs.[23] This peculiar wheel is said further to be moving all the time and yet not getting mutilated at all. Thus, besides furnishing us with the components of the year in greater detail, including the number of days and nights in a year, this mantra brings out symbolically the essence of time as lying in mutually contrasting values of mobility and constancy. The reconciliation of these contrasting values, however, is indicated by showing the belongingness of the wheel of time to the universal principle of *Ṛta*, which in itself is the principle of constancy in movement. As the closest offshoot and representative of *Ṛta*, time also goes on taking rounds and rounds without losing anyway its shape and identity, as constancy in movement is its essence.

There is yet another mantra seen by the same seer in which this wheel-symbolism recurs with still greater forcefulness and clarity in certain respects. It occurs in a hymn addressed to *Viṣṇu*. This reference bears out its ultimate bearing on the latter. He, in a way, is the owner of the chariot whose wheel is of the following description. It is divided equally into four parts. Each one of the parts has as many as ninety names. This body indeed is not an actual wheel but remains moving diversely and yet constantly like a wheel. If the body serving him as the wheel of his chariot is of this dimension, how immensely much greater would be the person behind it owning the entire chariot. Interestingly, however, he

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23 द्वादशारं नु हि तज्जरायु वर्वर्ति चक्रं परि द्यामृतस्य।
आ पुत्रा अग्ने मिथुनासो अत्र सप्तशतानि विंशतिश्च तस्थुः।। *Ibid., I.164.11.*

himself, notwithstanding his size and constancy, gets created by mantras and comes in response to invocation to him and remains always youthful or rather a child.[24] Obviously this description rounds up the whole thing by articulating the real agency behind this wheel of time as also by indicating to his agelessness symbolically by figuring him out as *yuva Kumāra*, that is, as a youth getting not old but rather younger through the passage of time. This is enough to suggest to his timelessness even while passing through the passage of time. Time is rather the wheel of his chariot riding which he remains not only un-ageing but also has the potentiality of getting younger. His capacity to recede in time and regain his childhood goes well with the possibility of his creation through mantras as well as his innocence to respond favourably to the invocations of his devotees. Thus, he forms the beginning as well as the end of the journey of the chariot of time inasmuch as he transcends time and at the same time makes full use of the process of time for his act of creation and sustenance. His transcendence of time entails his transcendence of space also opening thus the possibility of his assuming smaller and smaller bodily form on the one hand and bigger and bigger on the other reaching the infinitesimal on the one side and the infinity on the other. This is exactly how the great sage *Yājñavalkya* describes *Akṣara*, the Ultimate Reality in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in response to the query of *Gārgī* when he characterises It as neither small nor big, neither gross nor subtle, etc.[25] Moreover, it is this view of the Reality symbolised by the *yuvā Kumāra* which gets developed further subsequently in the form of *Bala-Kṛṣṇa, child-Kṛṣṇa* as the perfect incarnation of *Viṣṇu* and revealing His divinity in the midst of mundane affairs such as resting in the hands of *Yaśodā*, grazing cows, playing with cowherd boys, rescuing *Draupadī* from getting dishonoured by the *Kauravas*, and driving the chariot of *Arjuna* in the *Mahābhārata* war. These acts bear out His responsiveness to the calls of living beings devoted to Him as well as His standing beyond the constraints of time and space.

It is particularly this wheel symbolism which has led *Tilak* astray in formulating the misconceived theory of the Arctic Home of the Aryans. Particularly interesting from that viewpoint is a mantra seen by *Vatsa Kāṇva*. In this mantra it has been observed that both the heaven and the earth follow *Indra* in the same way as wheels of the chariot follow in

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24 चतुर्भिः साकं नवतिं च नामभिश्चक्रं न वृत्तं व्यतीरवीविपत्।
बृहच्छरीरो विमिमान ऋक्वभिर्युवाकुमारः प्रत्येत्याहवम्। । *Ibid.I.155.6.*

25 एतद्वै तदक्षरं गार्गि ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्त्यस्थूलमनण्वमह्रस्वमदीर्घम्। *Brh. Up. III.8.8.*

the footsteps of the horse.[26] On the basis of this and certain other kindred references, *Tilak* happens to think that the ancestors of the Vedic Aryans sometime in the past must have lived in the vicinity of the north pole where alone on this earth the heaven and the earth both can be seen in circular motion. While formulating his hypothesis, he, however, ignored the implications of the second hemistich of the mantra where drops of *Soma* also are said to follow *Indra* like the heaven and the earth obviously in their wheel-like movement.[27] Now, if even drops of *Soma* can be conceived as moving behind *Indra* like wheels of the chariot, why can the heaven and the earth also not be envisioned as moving behind him in a circular way without, of course, having to perceive the same sort of motion of the heaven and the earth at the poles? The movement of the heaven and the earth is, no doubt, circular rather than linear. If this fact can be understood by the scientist even without going to the poles, why can it not be understood by the seer without being obliged to have seen the same spectacle actually at the pole? As we have seen in the foregoing pages, the Vedic seer's wheel-symbolism has its root in the perception of finiteness of everything including movement itself. It is quite understandable that any motion which is finite, cannot afford to be linear. It has necessarily got to be circular, no matter howsoever wide the circle be. Not to talk of lesser entities, even *Indra*, having the heaven and the earth to move behind him like wheels, moves himself around everything like the circumference of the wheel moving round the spokes and sustaining them. This is what seer *Hiranyastupa* observes in regard to *Indra*: "*Indra is the ruler of the mobile as well as of the immobile, of the peaceful as well as of those having horns. He all alone is the ruler of all those who are active in this world. He goes round them like the circumference going round spokes.*"[28]

As regards the possibility of visualising the circular motion of the heavenly bodies, including particularly the sun without having visited the poles at all, this is evident from *Varāhamihira's* account of the movement of the sun in a circular way round the *Meru*, the North Pole, like a beautiful dancer.[29]

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26 अनु॑ त्वा॒ रोद॑सी उ॒भे च॒क्रं न व॒र्त्येत॑शम्। *RV. VIII. 6.38.*

27 अनु॑ सु॒वा॒नास॒ इन्द॑वः। *Ibid., VIII. 6.38.*

28 इन्द्रो॑ या॒तोऽव॑सितस्य॒ राजा॒ शम॑स्य च शृ॒ङ्गिणो॒ वज्र॑बाहुः।
सेदु॒ राजा॑ क्षयति चर्षणी॒नाम॒रान्न ने॒मिः परि॒ ता ब॑भूव।। *Ibid., I.32.15.*

29. मेरो॑ दिग्विभागो यस्मात् प्राची न भास्करात्तस्मिन्।
उदयते यावद्दिवं पर्येतीव सुन्दरी तावत्।। *Varāhamihira, Pancasiddāntikā, XV.11.*

Arati

One of the prominent forces coming in the way of the Vedic seer appears as *arāti*. It occurs in the *Saṁhitās* more than hundred times. The word *arāti* is feminine and masculine both. In one of *Gṛtsamada's* mantras, while praying to *Savitṛ*, it has been stated that the dispensation of the latter is transgressed neither by *Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman* and *Rudra* nor by *Arātis*.[1] Here obviously *arātis* stand as a class confronting such high divinities as the *Adityas* and the *Rudras*. Being posed as such, they cannot be taken as any ordinary beings. Moreover, in the *Yajurveda*, while rising to the wider horizon, the seer expresses his obligation to *Agni* that he has exposed and burnt down completely the *Arātis* as well as the *Rākṣasas*.[2] From this mantra it is evident that the *Arātis* were a class of beings kindred to the *Rākṣasas*. It, thus, provides justification for their being put along with high gods in the first mantra quoted above. There is another mantra seen by *Vasiṣṭha*, however, in which the seer states that *Arātis* of the people stand confronting him and prays, therefore, to *Indra* and *Varuṇa* to come to his rescue in the battlefield.[3] This account of *Vasiṣṭha*, in particular, shows that *Arātis* are something quite tangible, so tangible and personal as to confront the warrior in the battlefield and put him in the danger of his life.

It is on the basis of this last type of reference that most of the scholars in the modern times take *Arātis* as the aborigines of India who confronted the invading *Aryans* at the first instance in the open battlefield and when defeated took resort to relatively inaccessible forests and mountains, continued their campaign against the invaders from those safer resorts. This theory, however, receives a severe jolt from the fact that the hymn where this particular mantra occurs recounts a battle fought between two so-called *Aryan* forces themselves and has, therefore, least scope for the so-called non-*Aryans* to enter into the fray and present the crisis of life to such the great seer as *Vasiṣṭha*, if he was fighting at all in the battlefield. Thus, the moot question remains whether *Arātis* were kindred to *Rakṣas* or non-*Aryans* or were anything different from both of them made to appear in these garbs symbolically by the seer and fictitiously by the

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1 न यस्येन्द्रो वरुणो न मित्रो व्रतमर्यमा न मिनन्ति रुद्रः।
नारातयस्तमिदं स्वस्ति हुवे देवं सवितारं नमोभिः।। *RV.II.38.9.*

2 प्रत्युष्टं रक्षः प्रत्युष्टा अरातयो। निष्टप्तं रक्षो निष्टप्ता अरातयः।
उर्वन्तरिक्षमन्वेमि। *YV.I.7.*

3 सं भूम्या अन्तो ध्वसिरा अदृक्षतेन्द्रावरुणा दिवि घोषु आरुहत्।
अस्थुर्जनानामुप मामरातयोऽर्वागवसा हवनश्रुतागतम्।। *RV. VII.83.3.*

modern scholars concerned.

Confronted with this problem, when we go through all the references to *Arātis* in the *Saṁhitās*, what we find *prima facie* is that *Arātis* are neither *Rākṣasas* nor any non-*Aryans*, whosoever, exclusively but were figures used for describing tangibly the forces of hindrance coming in the way of the seer in his search for the higher reality and attempt at self-transformation. This proposition gets support from the very second mantra quoted above in which the seer expresses his obligation to *Agni* for having exposed the *Arātis* as well as the *Rākṣasas* and burnt them out completely so that he could ascend to the wide intermediate space leaving behind the constraints of the earth. Ascension of the seer to the intermediate space those days obviously was not possible as a matter of fact. The seer's experience of such ascension, therefore, is to be taken in the figurative sense of the widening of the horizons of his consciousness and the consequent sense of elevation thus experienced. It is when he comes to this higher experience that he feels that all his *Arātis* as well as the *Rākṣasas* have got burnt.

This experience is cognate to what a *Ṛgvedic* seer, namely *Pragātha*, straightaway describes as coming to him and others of kindred level of consciousness as a result of taking *Soma*. "*We have taken Soma,*" he observes, "*have become immortal, have attained to light and have found out the gods*", and adds, "*What now can Arāti do to us as also the deceipt of the mortal, O Immortal One.*"[4] The experience of the sense of immortality for oneself and one's proximity with divinities on intimate basis is not an ordinary one for the seer who always otherwise is rather too much conscious of his mortality. It is an indicator of a spectacular elevation in the level of his consciousness. From that elevated level, interestingly enough, this seer also has an experience cognate to that of the Yajurvedic one, referred to above, in regard particularly to *Arāti*. Both of them equally well feel their inaccessibility to *Arāti* or *Arātis*.

Similar is the experience of *Pratardana*, another Rgvedic seer. "*The Soma,*" he observes, "*getting purified by noble thoughts, goes across Arātis like a speedy horse.*" "*It is*"he adds, "*like the most relishable and desirable milk of*

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4 अपाम॒ सोम॑ममृता अभूमागन्म॒ ज्योति॒रवि॑दाम दे॒वान्।
किं नू॒नम॒स्मान् कृ॑णव॒दरा॑तिः किमु॑ धू॒र्तिर॒मृत॒ मर्त्य॑स्य।। *Ibid., VIII.48.3.*

Aditi, like a way to wideness and yet like a horse of ride fully controlled."[5] Evidently, this seer also, while describing the effect of *Soma*, talks of going across *Arātis* as well as entering into a state of wideness. His account of *Soma* as purified by noble thoughts bears out his experience of transcendence of ideation. It is in this trans-ideational state of consciousness that he comes to realise that now onwards he has reached across the *Arātis*. Description of this state of consciousness as the milk of *Aditi* is indeed all the more revealing. Needless to point out that *Aditi* is the Supreme Creatrix, infinite and undivided. Her milk, therefore, is symbolic of the consciousness of Infinity while drinking of that milk amounts to direct experience of that Infinity. This state of consciousness is also characterised by perfect self-control, as is evident from the seer's symbolisation of it through the riding of a perfectly controlled horse.

There is another mantra seen by *Bhārgava* which also talks of *Arātayaḥ* in connection with the effect of *Soma*. He prays to *Soma* to speed him up to the world of illuminations without themselves needing any goadings. In this magnanimous venture, tremendous will-power is the prime necessity. The seer, therefore, prays to *Soma* to destroy the *Arātis* of that will-power, since they are the main enemies of the venture and give way to the higher intellects of the aspirants, including the seer himself.[6] Since the goal set here by the seer is ascension to the world of illumination under the effect of *Soma*, there is no question at all of his having to counter any physical enemies. What is important in this connection is the victory of the higher intellect, as the seer himself aspires. *Arātayaḥ*, therefore, stand for the obstacles coming in the way of this ascension to the higher state of consciousness. That is why they are characterised as *aryaḥ*, enemies, in contrast to *Soma* which is the promoter of this ascension. There is another mantra seen by *Kaṇva* in which the *Arātis* are characterised straightaway as hindrances in the way or working of *Soma*, the agent of ascension.[7]

If *Soma* is the promoter of ascension through strengthening of the will power, *Agni* is the agency of destroying hindrances likely to come in the

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5 एष स्य सोमो मतिभिः पुनानोऽत्यो न वाजी तरतीदरातीः।
पयो न दुग्धमदितेरिषिरमुर्विव गातुः सुयमो न वोळ्हा।। *Ibid., IX.96.15.*

6 अचोदसो नो धन्वन्त्विन्दवः प्रसुवानासो बृहद्दिवेषु हरयः।
वि च नशन्न इषो अरातयोऽर्यो नशन्त सनिषन्त नो धियः।। *Ibid., IX.79.1.*

7 मा नः सोम परिबाधो मारातयो जुहुरन्त।
आ न इन्दो वाजे भज।। *Ibid., I.43.8.*

way of ascension. This idea is borne out by a mantra seen by *Kāśyapa* in which *Agni*, the knower of all beings, has been offered *Soma* for burning out completely all the forces coming in the way of ascension as hindrances and take all the aspirants of higher consciousness across obstructions like the boat crossing a turbulent river.[8] The word *arātiyatah* used in this mantra is highly significant. It is a denominative suggesting to sheer obstruction as the characteristic feature of those called *arātis* without requiring any concrete shape whatever.

That the operation of *Arātis* is rather universal and closely associated with the nature of things itself is evident from a mantra seen by *Atri* in which they are said to have kept concealed in mortals *Agni* who otherwise is the ruler of all the beings existing in this world as well as the shelter in which they dwell. To confine the universal ruler as well as the shelter within the ruled and the sheltered is the irony of all the ironies and has been attributed by the seer to *Arātis*. In view of the seer, this irony can be set right by condemning those who condemn others. The seer points out to his secret knowledge as the instrument of setting right this arch malady.[9] What the seer envisages in this mantra is the all-pervading and all-controlling character of *Agni* in his essence but ironically enough getting himself confined to individuals in this world as the principle of their lives and as such being treated as exclusive to each individual or figuratively to his household. This is the confinement of the ruler to the body of the ruled and indeed reducing the abode of all to the humble position of the resident of the individual's body. As a matter of fact, this state of things is well within the scheme of the Creator himself. If there is anything amiss in the whole affair, that is the ignorance of the individual concerning the scheme. It is in this operation of colossal ignorance, therefore, that lies the effect of the operation of *Arātis*. The secret knowledge acquired by *Atri* or indeed by the Vedic seer in general is what can set right this deplorable state of things by making the individual conscious of the real status of *Agni* kept otherwise confined to his petty body. This knowledge would automatically result in the elimination of *Arātis*, sheer forces of ignorance as they are.

Bracketing of *Arātayaḥ* with *Aghāḥ* and *Aryaḥ* as has been done at so many places in the Veda may also be helpful in understanding the real

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8 जातवेदसे सुनवाम सोममरातीयतो नि दहाति वेदः।
स नः पर्षदति दुर्गाणि विश्वा नावेव सिन्धुं दुरितात्यग्निः।। *Ibid., I.99.1.*

9 वसां राजानं वसतिं जनानामरातयो निदधुर्मर्त्येषु।
ब्राह्मण्यत्रेरव तं सृजन्तु निन्दितारो निन्द्यासो भवन्तु ।। *Ibid., V.2.6.*

character of the former. *Śaṁyu*, for instance, prays to *Pūṣan* to come to him so that he may put his request in the ear of the latter for the removal of *aghāḥ, aryaḥ* and *arātayaḥ* understandably from the course of his life.[10] *Bharadvāja* goes a step still further in not only informing Indra and Agni that *aghāḥ, aryaḥ* and *arātayaḥ* are tormenting him but also in praying to them to remove from his way all sorts of enmities so that no more may they see the sun.[11] Seeing of the sun is obviously symbolic of continuance in existence, no matter be it physical or non-physical. Characterisation of all the three, i.e., *aghāḥ, aryaḥ* and *arātayaḥ* together as enmies is sufficient to bear out that basically all three are the same rather than enemies. The commonness of the prayer between two seers shows that the adversity underlying their experiences is not exclusive to anyone individually. *Śaṁyu* and *Bharadvāja*, however, as per the tradition, belong to one and the same family or at least lineage. But exactly the same idea finds expression in one of the mantras of an eminent seer, *Vasiṣṭha*, who certainly belongs to an entirely different family and particularly in a hymn charged with an atmosphere of war. In this famous hymn of *Dāśarājña*, the seer informs *Indra* and *Varuṇa* that *aghāḥ, aryaḥ* and *arātayaḥ* are tormenting him from all around and prays to them that since they rule over the properties of both the worlds, they should provide him and people like him with adequate protection so that they may swim across the world and reach the heaven.[12] Recurrence of exactly the same idea in these three mantras seen by different seers makes the actuality of the background of war of the last mantra a suspect. This, therefore, will have to be discussed separately and thoroughly. For the present, however, one would like to point out to the inevitable conclusion summarily that the war in which these three seers of different backgrounds are feeling themselves to be encircled by enmities rather than by enemies must have been waged more probably on the spiritual plane since it is the spiritual plane where individuals of diverse backgrounds have greater probability of common experience and moreover, it is the spiritual rather than the physical which any seer as such is concerned with and to be sure wages his war against. This way of looking at things here gets further support from *Vasiṣṭha's* pointing out to

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10 आ मा॑ पूष॒न्नुप॒द्रव॒ शंसि॑षं॒ नु ते॑ अपिक॒र्ण आ॑घृणे।
अ॒घा अ॒र्यो अरा॑तयः।। *Ibid., VI.48.16*

11 इन्द्रा॑ग्नी॒ तप॑न्ति मा॒घा अ॒र्यो अरा॑तयः।
अप॒ द्वेषां॒स्याकृ॑तं युयु॒तं सूर्या॒दधि॑।। *Ibid., VI.59.8*

12 इन्द्रा॑वरुणाव॒भ्यात॑पन्ति मा॒घान्य॒र्यो व॒नुषा॒मरा॑तयः।
यु॒वं हि वस्व॑ उ॒भय॑स्य॒ राज॒थोऽद्य॑ स्मा नोऽवतं॒ पार्ये॑ दि॒वि।। *Ibid., VII.83.5.*

crossing over the sea of this world and going to the heaven as the aim with which he was waging the arduous war. If killing of actual enemies and gaining of additional territory on this earth would have been the real objective behind his venture, he would not have talked of surviving over to the heaven at all. There are subsequent accounts, no doubt, where the warrior talks of going to heaven but only when anticipating the danger of being killed in the war. After getting the enemies defeated and eliminated, on the other hand, the victorious warrior has always engaged himself in enjoying the fruits of his conquest.

It is interesting to note that the same *Vasiṣṭha* who has given the account of the *Dāśarājña* war involving extensively the role of the *Arāti*, has bracketed the latter even at the very outset of his *Maṇḍala* in the *Saṁhitā* with disease. In the mantra under consideration he prays to *Agni* to burn all the *Arātis* as also disease by means of the same heat with which he had burnt the man of gossips.[13] It is quite understandable that here in the context of prayer for removal of disease rather than the diseased, *Arāti* has been used in the sense of enmities rather than enemies and *Jarūtham* in the sense of gossip rather than the man of gossip. It is then and then alone that we can explain suitably the burning of *Arāti*, *Jarūtham* and disease by the common fire. So is the implication of another mantra seen by *Kaṇva*. He prays to the *Aśvins* to come to him as the father goes to the son and provide him with protection and separate from him whatever *Arāti* he has left in him.[14] Separation of *Arāti* from oneself is entirely different from keeping away the enemies. It is psychological rather than physical in its import. It is against this background that we can also explain properly the Atharvavedic prayer in which the seer expresses his heart-felt desire that he may cross over night after night by means of his body without getting anyway hurt while his *Arātis* must not cross them like the people seeking to cross over a deep channel of water without having any boat at their disposal.[15] The highly symbolic character of the mantra is evident in representing night as a deep channel of water incapable of being crossed in the absence of a boat. The body free of diseases and other deficiencies is taken to be the boat necessary for this

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13 विश्वा अग्ने अप दहारातीर्येभिस्तपोभिरदहो जरूथम्।
प्र निस्वरं चातयस्वामीवाम्।। *Ibid., VII.1.7.*

14 आ नूनमश्विना युवं वत्सस्य गन्तमवसे।
प्रास्मै यच्छतमवृकं पृथुच्छर्दिर्यीयुतं या अरातयः।। *Ibid., VIII.9.1.*

15 रात्रिं रात्रिमरिष्यन्तस्तरेम तन्वा वयम्।
गम्भीरमप्लवा इव न तरेयुररातयः।। *AV.XIX.50.3.*

act of crossing. The *Arātis* also, therefore, have to take recourse to a suitable body for the accomplishment of this task. Such a body available to them is the seer's body or personality itself. It is now easy to understand why the seer wishes that his *Arātis* must not cross the same channel in any case. Their crossing the channel would necessarily imply their lingering in the body or personality of the seer.

Moreover, there are a number of other mantras in which *Arāti* occurs explicitly in the psychological sense. For instance there is a mantra seen by *Plāta* in which *Viśve-Devāḥ* have been prayed to keep away from him disease, propensity of non-sacrificing, malicious enmity (*Arāti*) of the wicked, hatred, besides providing shelter for his well being.[16] Similarly, in another mantra, *Agni* has been invoked by *Vāmadeva* to burn, like the dry wood, one who entertains *Arāti* or enmity towards him.[17] The word *Arāti* is indeed so much established in the sense of enmity in the mind of the seer that many a time he has used it with the addition of the suffix *vanip* to it in the sense of possession. Thus formed, the word *arātivān* means one possessed of enmity. Using this word, *Dīrghatamas* in one of his mantras prays to *Agni* that to one who is miserly, sinful, inimical and habituated to harm the virtuous with double dealing, may the particular mantra prove a heavy sentence so that he may distress himself by his revilings.[18]

That the hostility of the *Arātis* is not racial, political or economic but basically valuational, is evident from a mantra seen by *Gṛtsamada* in which he prays to *Bṛhaspati* to remove from the path of the innocent and virtuous one who is inimical towards them, behaves like a terrific wolf and seeks to do harm to them while they are proceeding on their path to the Divine.[19]

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16 अपामीवामप विश्वामनाहुतिमपारातिं दुर्विदत्रामघायतः।
आरे देवा द्वेषो अस्मद्युयोतनोरु णः शर्म यच्छता स्वस्तये।। *RV.X.63.12.*

17 यो नो अरातिं समिधान चक्रे नीचा तं धक्ष्यतसं न शुष्कम्।। *Ibid.,IV.4.4.*

18 यो नो अग्ने अररिवाँ अघायुररातीवा मर्चयति द्वयेन।
मन्त्रो गुरुः पुनरस्तु सो अस्मा अनुमृक्षीष्ट तन्वं दुरुक्तैः।। *Ibid., I.147.4.*

19 उत वा यो नो मर्चयादनागसोऽराति वा मर्तः सानुको वृकः।
बृहस्पते अप तं वर्तया पथः सुगं नो अस्यै देववीतये कृधि।। *Ibid., II.23.7*

The whole façade of concretisation of *Arātis* gets completely lifted up in one of the mantras of the seer *Bandhu* who prays to *Indra* to let him not move away from the proper path of life, from the determination to sacrifice and get the delight of *Soma* as also not to let remain lurking within him or indeed within people of his sort anywhere the enemies of the inner being.[20] Seer *Vāmadeva* goes a step still further in showing how he could make himself free of all *Arātis* while lying even in the womb of the mother. He claims that he could not be deterred from his righteous position and rather overpowered all the vices by means of his mighty virility. The profound wisdom innate in him made him free of all *Arātis*, as a consequence of which he, getting further strengthened, crossed over the region of winds, he observes.[21] The region of the winds referred to by *Vāmadeva* is obviously the intermediate region of the Yajurvedic seer quoted already at footnote No.2. If that region was at least open to that seer, which, however, he could by no means reach physically at that stage of human history, it was not open at all to *Vāmadeva* since he was still lying in the womb of the mother. Even then, however, if he talks of crossing over the region of the winds, the latter must obviously be taken to represent symbolically the state of consciousness higher than the mundane implied by the *Vyāhṛti bhuvaḥ* lying above *bhūḥ*. The propelling force he used in crossing the intermediate region and reaching understandably the heaven was, as he clearly states, the profound innate wisdom obtaining universally within each and every being and directing from within the cosmic process. While the humanity has come to a tentative grasp of this innate wisdom so late as in the modern times in the form of, say, the *elan vital* as termed by *Henry Bergson*, and other Vedic seers could understand it through *tapas* at a relatively advanced stage of their respective lives, *Vāmadeva* could understand and even make practical use of it in reaching the highest state of consciousness even while lying in the womb of the mother. It was with the use of this innate wisdom, as he states, that he could get rid of *Arātis*. Obviously, these *Arātis*, therefore, could not but be the psychic forces adverse to progression and elevation. What this state of highest being free of *Arātis* is like, is further elaborated upon by *Gṛtsamada* in one of his mantras addressed to *Apāṁ Napāt*. He considers it as the basic source of energy, symbolised by horse, as also of illumination obviously in the form of

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20 मा प्रगामपथो वयं मा यज्ञादिन्द्र सोमिनः।
मान्तःस्थुर्नो अरातयः।। *Ibid., X.57.1*

21 न घा स मामप जोषं जभारा भीमास त्वक्षसा वीर्येण।
ईर्मा पुरन्धिरजहादरातीरुत वातो अतरच्छूशुवानः।। *Ibid., IV.27.2*

consciousness. It is through intimation of this highest source of energy and consciousness that one can go beyond the last tinge of oppression and anger. For this, however, one need not go anywhere outside, the seer asserts, but should look within his own personality. It is a house made of unbaked stuff, and yet houses within it the imperishable Being which is approachable neither to *Arātis* nor to falsehoods, observes the seer.[22]

Arāti is associated symbolically with the act of swimming also. In one of the mantras associating *Arāti* with the act of swimming it has been observed that the person whom *Brāhmaṇaspati*, the vigilant protector, provides protection, can be reached through swimming neither by sin or crookedness nor by *Arātis* and double dealers.[23] In this figurative statement, the state of divine protection is conceived as oceanic for sin and crookedness as well as *Arātis* and double dealers, simply because it is invulnerable to all of them. In contrast to this state of things, there is an instance in which *Agni* is prayed to swim over *Arātis* while himself remaining incapable of being swum by them.[24] Both these mantras, thus show the *Arātis'* contrariety as well as vulnerability to the Divine remaining itself, however, invulnerable to them. The bracketing of *Arātis* with sin and crookedness, besides double dealers, is also significant as it bears out the possibility of their abstractness. They are thus abstract vices bent upon creating opposition to the operation of the Divine in the affairs of the world.

In another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva*, they are represented as forces of ignorance and undelight obstructing availability of knowledge and delight to the world through the agency of the Divine. In the concerned mantra it has been stated that *Indra* assuming the form of a swan, loaded himself with thousands and trillions of pressings of *Soma* and he, the profoundly wise, left behind him in the delight of *Soma* the *Arātis* simply because they were ignorant.[25] It is significant to note that the hymn in which this mantra occurs is one of self-realisation of the seer experiencing his complete identity with *Indra* in regard to the act of sustaining the creation

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22 अश्वस्यात्र जनिमास्य च स्वर्दुहो रिषः सम्पृचः पाहि सूरीन्।
आमासु पूर्षु परो अप्रमृष्यं नारातयो विनशन्नानृतानि।। *Ibid.,II 35.6.*

23 न तमंहो न दुरितं कुतश्चन नारातयस्तितिरुर्न द्वयाविनः।
विश्वा इदस्माद् ध्वरसो वि बाधसे यं सुगोपाः रक्षसि ब्रह्मणस्पते।। *Ibid., II.23.5.*

24 अग्ने सहस्व पृतना अभिमातीरपास्य। दुष्टरस्तरन्नरातीर्वर्चोधा यज्ञवाहसे।। *Ibid., III.24.1.*

25 आदाय श्येनो अभरत्सोमं सहस्रं सवाँ अयुतञ्च साकम्।
अत्रा पुरन्धिरजहादरातीर्मदे सोमस्य मूरा अमूरः।। *Ibid.IV.26.7.*

as well as bringing illumination to mankind. The illumination and the sap of sustenance are fetched by him from higher region of the heaven itself. By virtue of possessing illumination and sap of delight, he has become invulnerable to the *Arātis* elucidating thus tangibly what has been observed by another seer, namely *Pragātha*, quoted already at footnote No.4.

In a mantra seen by *Śunaḥ Śepa*, *Arātis* are directly contrasted with *Ratis* signifying scarcity and dearth in contrast to liberality and abundance, and a prayer has been made to *Indra* to let them sleep in contrast to the *Ratis* which are to be awakened.[26] Being pervaded by the Divine, the creation ought to have been a place of plenty in delight and knowledge. But actually it is not so. *Arātis*, according to the Vedic seer, are the evil forces which have obstructed the flow of the divine plenitude to the world rendering it a place of scarcities. This idea is reflected directly also in a mantra seen by *Kakṣīvat* who observes how the *Aśvins* provided protection to *Vasa* in such a way that within the span of a single dawn he came to gain in thousands and in association with *Indra* drove away misfortunes, which indeed are *Arātis*, enemies of *Pṛthuśravas*.[27] *Vasa* represents the state of self-control while dawn the spiritual illumination. When illumination comes to the man of self-control partly as a result of his own efforts and partly owing to the divine grace, he, being innately endowed with abundance of knowledge and delight, gets rid of all misfortunes in the form of *Arātis*, enemies and gets naturally restored to him the wisdom and delight.

The Vedic seer is concerned with elimination of the *Arāti* not only on the metaphysical but also on the human level. This is evident in *Viśvāmitra's* prayer offered to *Agni* that the latter when approached with the sense of devotion be beneficent like a friend towards his friend and the parents towards their children and as the settlements of people are very much inimical amongst themselves, he may burn their mutual enmities so as to make their lives comfortable.[28] Indeed, it is this latter wish of the seer which most probably has led to his account of *Arātis* also as embodied

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26 ससन्तु त्या अरातयो बोधन्तु शूर रातयः। *Ibid., I.29.4.*

27 एकस्या वस्तोरावतं रणाय वर्शमश्विना सनये सहस्रा।
निरहतं दुच्छुना इन्द्रवन्ता पृथुश्रवसो वृषणावरातीः।। *Ibid., I.116.21.*

28 भवा नो अग्ने सुमना उपेतौ सखेव सख्ये पितरेव साधु।
पुरुद्रुहो हि क्षितयो जनानां प्रति प्रतीचीर्दहतादरातीः।। *Ibid., III.18.1.*

beings tormenting people so as to invite the attention of knowledgeable persons to their elimination. It is in this tradition laid down by the Vedic seer that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* have come to be composed so as to highlight the evils operating in society in the form of *Rāvaṇa* and *Kaṅsa* leading to elimination of them through co-operation of the human and the Divine as materialised in the incarnations of *Rama* and *Kṛṣṇa*.

Dasarajna

There is a whole hymn of ten mantras in the *Ṛgveda* seen by *Vasiṣṭha* and is known as *Dāśarajña*. It is named so on account of dealing with a war waged between King *Sudās* on one side and ten kings on the other. Until now this whole hymn unsuspectingly has been regarded as more or less a realistic account of an actual war waged by two forces somewhere in modern Punjab. Since there were as many as ten kings fighting jointly against a rather bigger King named *Sudās*, it is concluded that this relatively small area was divided among petty royalties fighting against one another and only incidentally coming to form a joint front against the bigger one having come somehow to threaten their existence.

Interestingly enough, this hymn bears a singular reference to *Dāsas*, *Vṛtras* and Aryans fighting jointly on one side against *Sudās* who himself obviously was an Arya.[1] This reference has been looked upon as somewhat inconvenient by the followers of the Aryan Invasion theory, since as per the presupposition of this theory, the war in any case should have been waged between the Aryans and Non-Aryans exclusively. Aryans as well as *Dāsas* and *Vṛtras*, representing the Non-Aryans, fighting jointly against *Sudās* was an improbability as per this theory at least at the early stage of the invasion. This problem has been sought to be resolved by assigning a somewhat later date to this hymn representing the stage when the Aryans had settled down considerably in the North-Western region of the country and had started infighting amongst themselves taking the help of the non-Aryans also who by that time were a defeated lot and were capable of being deployed by one group of Aryans against the other. Scholars have gone to this extent in explaining the background of this hymn ignoring the fact that this hymn has been seen by *Vasiṣṭha* who is one of the earliest seers of the Vedic age as he is the author of one of the family *maṇḍalas* and at that is a contemporary of *Viśvāmitra*, the seer of the third *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*. Distortion of this glaring fact by upholders of the invasion theory makes not only the theory itself a suspect but also obliges one to look into the content of the hymn afresh and explore the possibility of explaining it otherwise without having to distort anything.

To begin with, it has to be noted that in the entire hymn there is no reference whatever to any territorial loss or gain which otherwise ought to have been the prime concern in a war of the kind where ten kings came together to fight against *Sudās*. Instead of any territorial gain, what forms

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1 दासौ च वृत्रा हतमार्याणि च सुदासमिन्द्रावरुणावसावतम्। । *RV. VII.83.1.*

the basic motive behind the war is the search for cows by the people on the side of *Sudās*. Can the loss of a few cows form the sufficient ground for waging an all out war in which as many as ten kings might feel the compulsion to come together against a solitary king striving for the restoration of those cows? The matter could have been understandable to some extent, had those kings been purely non-Aryans fighting against an Aryan king, as the racial animosity could have got flared on even this petty issue powerfully enough to unite the non-Aryans. But the case is just the other way round. The motivation is petty and yet it is supposed to have broken the deep-rooted deadlock of racial animosity obliging the Aryans and non-Aryans to come together, forget their entire past and present a common front against *Sudās*. This is simply meaningless in view of the dynamics of actual history.

The hypothesis of actual war having been waged between *Sudās* and the ten kings having failed us so easily, we are obliged to look for some other way out for explaining this hymn. That obviously is the way of symbolism. In that regard, we, by this time, have decided the symbolic significance of at least two words occurring in this hymn. Those are *go* and *Arāti*. As we have already seen, *go* in the Veda is scarcely an acutal cow. Much more frequently it has been used symbolically in the sense of the higher wisdom, as is the basic subject matter of the Vedas. *Arāti*, on the other hand, means the psychic hindrances coming in the way of attaining to that wisdom.

Taking these two simple propositions as our starting point, when we make a review of the content of the hymn, we find the entire scenario of it taking a different turn. The warriors waging this war do not remain actual warriors any more but turn out to be seers themselves waging war against the forces of obstruction arising in the path of attainment of higher wisdom or consciousness. This idea finds confirmation in the fact that the person craving for the help of *Indra* and *Varuṇa* in the hymn for the sake of people of his sort as well as for himself is not any actual warrior but seer *Vasiṣṭha* himself. It is the seer and his like who are moving fast in search of cows wielding heavy axes in their hands. It is these people who form the group called *Sudās* and it is in their fighting that *Dāsas, Vṛtras* as well as the Aryans are getting killed.[2]

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2 युवां नरा पश्यमानास आप्यं प्राचा गव्यन्तः पृथुपर्शवो ययुः।
दासा च वृत्रा हतमार्याणि च सुदासमिन्द्रावरुणावसावतम्।। *Ibid., VII.83.1.*

The seer going in search of actual cows with heavy axe in his hand and killing *Dāsas*, *Vṛtras* and Aryans just for the sake of cows carries no sense at all. Moreover, he cannot be so narrow-minded as to feel his personal kinship with such gods of universal character as *Indra* and *Varuṇa* and implore them to kill other human beings like *Dāsas* and *Vṛtras* or even the Aryans. Use of *Vṛtra* in the plural in itself is sufficient to suggest that this term does not any more stand for any particular person but for a certain trait of character. So is *Āryāṇi*. As a matter of fact, *Dāsa*, *Vṛtra* and *Ārya* all three are masculine but in this hymn are used in the neuter gender. This so significant a change in their gender suggests to their secondary use here in this hymn. When a particular word gets removed from its primary semantic value, it automatically becomes symbolic. Thus, they possibly stand for the hindrances in the path of higher attainment of the seer and his followers.

In the next mantra, the seer craves for the guidance of *Indra* and *Varuṇa* in a dangerous situation of war where warriors move about with banners and where anything unpleasant is likely to happen any moment. According to the seer's perception, it indeed is such a dangerous situation where all those looking towards the heaven have got terrified.[3] It is usual for the common man to be terrified by the situation of war. But the account of terror in the heart of those looking towards the heaven is something different pointing out to something different from the situation of actual war. It is only the aspirants of spirituality who are capable of directing their eyes towards the heaven and by no means the commonplace warrior. The seer's desire for the guidance of *Indra* and *Varuṇa* in such a situation confirms further the spiritual orientation of the account.

The next mantra tells us how the extremities of the earth have got shaken, the sound and fury of the war has reached the heaven and the enmities of the people have surrounded the seer.[4] Now if only *Arātis* were to surround the seer, the situation could plausibly be explained as one of actual war. Addition of the term *janānām*, however, obviously shows that the seer was surrounded not by any actual enemies but by the enmities of the people. Needless to point out that while on the path of spiritual

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3 यत्रा॒ नरः॑ स॒मय॑न्ते कृ॒तध्व॑जो॒ यस्मि॑न्ना॒जा भव॑ति॒ किंच॒न प्रि॒यम्।
यत्रा॒ भय॑न्ते॒ भुव॑ना स्व॒र्दृश॒स्तत्रा॑ न इन्द्रावरु॒णाधि॑ वोचतम्।। *Ibid., VII.83.2.*

4 सं भूम्या॒ अन्ता॑ ध्वसि॒रा अ॑दृक्ष॒तेन्द्रा॑वरुणा दि॒वि घोष॒ आरु॑हत्।
अस्थु॒र्जना॑ना॒मुप॒ मामरा॑तयो॒ऽर्वागव॑सा हवनश्रुता ग॑तम्।। *Ibid., VII.83.3.*

ascension, it is but natural for the aspirant to feel the shaking of physicality and encirclement of himself by sheer biases of all varieties very often concretising themselves into a war-like situation. In this state of utter helplessness, guidance and help of the Divine become all the more necessary.

The fifth mantra reiterates the same idea adding something highly revealing. Here the seer tells us once more how the evil doings of the enemy and enmities of the wicked are tormenting him from all around and how it is *Indra* and *Varuṇa* alone who can protect and enable him to go across the world to the heaven by means of their rule extending in the heaven as well as prevailing in this world.[5] It is significant to note the motive of the war mentioned here so clearly. It is security from the dangers of physicality as well as intense desire to cross over to the heaven. Thus it brings clarification to the status of the *svar dṛśaḥ* mentioned earlier in the mantra quoted at *footnote No.3*. It is evident from it that the *svar dṛśaḥ* of the earlier mantra are one and the same with those wishing to cross over to heaven as mentioned in the last mantra quoted above and they are none but the seer himself along with all others having the same aptitude. In view of the impossibility of aan actual warrior craving so intensively for attaining to heaven through participation in a war, the seer's craving for the same amplitude must transform the nature of the war itself.

The fourth mantra in the hymn introduces two significant words *Bheda* and *Tṛtsu*. *Bheda* represents the enemy while *Tṛtsu* refers to the side of the seer. *Bheda* literally means division. Addition of the adjective *aprati*, unique, to it, makes this division most diabolic. *Tṛtsu*, on the other hand, means one desirous of going across. While diabolical *Bheda* is the enemy of *Sudās*, *Tṛtsus* are those working hard spiritually for the safety of him. The priesthood of the *Tṛtsus* is symbolical of the spiritual effort of those craving to reach heaven through guarantee of safety to *Sudās*.[6]

The sixth mantra in the hymn adds significantly to our knowledge of the opposition of *Sudās*. It tells us for the first time how the opposition of *Sudās* was formed by a combination of ten kings. It is further stated here

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5 इन्द्रावरुणावभ्या तपन्ति माघान्यर्यो वनुषामरातयः।
युवं हि वस्व उभयस्य राजथोऽध नोऽवतं पार्ये दिवि।। *Ibid., VII.83.5*

6 इन्द्रावरुणा वधनाभिरुति भेदं वन्चन्ता प्र सुदासमावतम्।
ब्रह्माण्येषां शृणुतं हवीमनि सत्या तृत्सूनामभवत् पुरोहितिः।। *Ibid., VII.83.4.*

that forces fighting on both the sides of the battlefield invoke in common the same *Indra* and *Varuṇa* for attaining to their desired objective, no matter, conflicting to each other's. Ten kings are on one side while *Sudās* alone is on the other.[7] Further in the next mantra it has been observed that the group of ten kings confronting *Sudās* was non-sacrificing and it is due to this that it could not fight successfully against him. This indeed is stated to be the basic difference between the approaches of the two sides. The ten kings also, as has been observed in the sixth mantra, invoked the two divinities as well as *Sudās*. But what they lacked in was the performance of sacrifice. This proved decisive in favour of *Sudās*. Being pleased with the sacrifices of the latter, the mantra observes, the gods came to his side in course of fighting resulting ultimately in his victory.[8]

In consistency with the line of approach applied so far in the interpretation of this hymn not as an account of actual war but as a symbolic representation of a certain spiritual phenomenon where as many as ten forces combined get defeated by a single force by virtue of its sacrificing nature, it looks quite feasible to identify the ten kings with the five sense organs and five organs of action while *Sudās* with the mind. This identification gets positive support from the *Upaniṣadic* parable of rivalry between sense organs and organs of action on one side and mind on the other. In this rivalry, as the *Upaniṣad* tells us, it is the former who always get defeated.[9] An interesting precedent of it is traceable in the *Ṛgveda* itself. In one of the mantras seen by *Dhīrghatamas* there is an account of ten-fold fires burning around the seer and tormenting him quite for long which he, however, withstood well and consequently attained to his remarkable seerhood. These fires obviously stand for the tension exercised by the organs of sense and action on the mind. Had these organs not been there to exercise their pull on the mind distracting it at each step, the latter would understandably have lived in absolute plenitude of its own, as it happens to a certain extent in the state of dreamless sleep. In this state, the individual remains all the same but for the suspension of the function of the organs. Sheer suspension of the

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7 यु॒वां ह॑वन्त उ॒भया॑स आ॒जिष्विन्द्रं॑ च॒ वस्वो॒ वरु॑णं च सा॒तये॑ ।
यत्र॒ राज॑भि र्द॒शभि॒र्निबा॑धितं॒ प्र सु॒दास॒माव॑तं॒ तृत्सु॑भिः स॒ह ।।।। *Ibid., VII.83.6*

8 दश॒ राजा॑नः॒ समि॑ता॒ अय॑ज्यवः सु॒दास॑मिन्द्रावरुणा॒ न यु॑युधुः ।
स॒त्या नृ॒णाम॑द्म॒सदा॒मुप॑स्तुति र्दे॒वा ए॑षामभवन् दे॒वहू॑तिषु ।। *Ibid., VII.83.7*

9. *Praśna Up. IV.1-2.*

function of the organs, however, brings colossal difference to the experience of the individual concerned. Anyone howsoever tormented in the waking state, gets complete relief in the state of dreamless sleep. Experience of the dreamless sleep, however, is just a fore-taste of what anyone can experience in the yogic state of complete suspension or elimination of the tension exercised on the mind by the organs. And this is quite usual to the seer. The more intensively he experiences the plenitude of the pure mind unaffected by contamination of the organs, the more acutely he is conscious of the tormentation presented by the organs in the waking state of ordinary man. This experience may, indeed, be so acute as to make the self be conceived as being roasted from all around in fire or as ten kings surrounding a solitary one and seeking to kill him.

In this tug-of-war between organs and mind, the decisive factor is the exclusive devotion of the mind to the Divine. If not the senses, the sense-mind at least representing co-ordination of the functioning of the senses may also show its devotion towards the Divine when finding itself in distress. But that devotion is just pragmatic shown only for the sake of a certain gain which otherwise is impossible for it to get. It is a short of self-giving which is the crux of sacrifice. It is only the pure mind standing above senses and sense-mind which is capable of offering itself wholly to the service of the Divine merging its own interest in that of the latter. Thus, while the ten kings represent the ten organs, and their union the sense-mind, *Sudās* symbolises the pure mind with exclusive devotion to the Divine. This interpretation is borne out by the derivative meaning of the word *Sudās* also. *Sāyaṇa*, for instance, explains this word as a composite formation of two words *su+ das*, wherein he treats the latter as formed out of the root *da*, to give. Derived thus, the word *Sudās* means one inclined always to giving. By virtue of this nature, therefore, when he merges himself in the Divine, the victory becomes ensured to him in confrontation with the ten kings whose pragmatic devotion boils down to no devotion at all resulting in their defeat. The story of *Umā Haimavatī* in the *Kena Upaniṣad* conveys this idea in its own way. According to this story, gods at one time became proud of their victory over the *Asuras*. Intending to subdue them, Brahman assumed the form of a *Yakṣa* appearing at a certain distance from the gods. Gods became curious to know as to who this *Yakṣa* was and sent *Agni* to inquire about his identity. Having approached the *Yakṣa* before *Agni* could put his query to him, the *Yakṣa* himself asked *Agni* as to who he was. *Agni* said that he was the god of fire and could burn the whole world within no time. Then the *Yakṣa* put a blade of grass before him asking him to burn it. With all his fury exercised, *Agni* could not burn it at all and turned back

crestfallen. Second time god *Vāyu* was deputed by the gods to inquire about the *Yakṣa*. He too, however, returned likewise. Lastly when *Indra* was sent to carry out the task, the *Yakṣa* disappeared and in his place emerged *Umā Haimavatī* , a beautiful lady. It was this lady who disclosed to *Indra* the secret of the whole incident pronouncing at the same time *Indra's* superiority over other gods owing to his coming closest to Brahman, the aboslute.[10] Rendered in spiritual terms, while *Agni represents vāk, and Vāyu prāṇa, Indra* stands for the pure mind, and, as such, comes closest to *the Reality*. Applying the same formula to the story of *Sudās*, while the ten kings *representing the ten* organs fail in their mission, *Sudās* representing pure mind, comes *out victorious* through the merger of the latter in the Divine represented by *Indra* and *Varuṇa*. *Indra* himself, as a matter of fact, is the pure mind on the spiritual plane whose just outer façade is *Sudās* by virtue of being a human formulation of the divine stuff.

The above interpretation finds further confirmation in the remaining three mantras also. The eighth mantra, for instance, characterises the *dāśarājña* as a universal phenomenon by describing it straightaway as *'obtaining universally'*. *Indra's* support to *Sudās* also must, therefore, be something equally universal. In this universal scenario, the aspirants of higher consciousness above the pull of the sensuous are termed as *Tṛtsavaḥ*, those desiring to swim across. As it is usual for consciousness, no matter sensory, mental or spiritual, to be symbolised by water, those wishing to ascend from the lower state of consciousness to the higher one can naturally be taken as swimmers. Coming to the spiritual *sādhanā* involved in the process of ascension, *Tṛtsavaḥ* are described as *śvityañcaḥ* and *kapardinaḥ*. *Śvityañcaḥ* means those moving towards whiteness while the latter is the universally admitted symbol of purity. In the Veda, however, whiteness has got a deeper meaning. It refers to the illumination beyond the diversity of ideation as well as physicality. It is that very illumination owing to which as its burden the famous *Gāyatrī* mantra has become so important and sacred. It asks mankind universally to meditate on the venerable illumination, *bhargas*, lying beyond the physical, vital and mental, symbolised by *bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ* and *svaḥ*, so that its intellect may get sharpened for higher understanding. The *śvityañcaḥ* of the hymn under discussion are the aspirants of that very illumination.

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10 *Kena Upaniṣad II.*

It is on account of their exclusive concentration on that illumination that they have ceased to care for their heir which consequently has grown wild. As a result, they have turned *kapardins*, those keeping long hair. Whatever worship they perform, they perform it from the core of their heart and intellectual capacity, *dhiyā dhīvantaḥ*. They, thus, are the real aspirants of illumination beyond the ocean of the worldliness, so to say.[11] In this universally pervasive venture, while the aspirants are trying to swim over the ocean, the Divine is helping them partially in a twofold manner. In the form of *Indra*, It is removing the forces of hindrance symbolised by *Vṛtra* while in the form of *Varuṇa*, It is regulating the progress of the aspirant. It is from this perspective that the seer prays particularly to these two divinities to provide him or rather mankind their full protection.[12]

In this prayer for protection, there is nothing like crisis of any actual war, much less the so-called *Dāśarājña*, but a crisis of a different sort. It is the crisis of tight grip of the physical and vital on the human consciousness which the seer wants to get rid of. It looks like the ocean which the seer wants to go across. While in the process of swimming over it, he craves for protection of the Divine particularly in the form of *Indra* and *Varuṇa*. The protection craved for, however, is not just a lending of helping hand in crossing the ocean but is expected to culminate in the state of absolute rest and illumination symbolised by boundless resort, *saprathāḥ mahī śarma*, and immortal light of *Aditi* respectively, as attaining to this state of things is the purpose of the dynamics of *Ṛta* whose promoter *Aditi* is, *ṛtāvṛdhaḥ*.[13] No actual king involved in an actual war can ever think of attaining to boundless resort and immortal light of the Ultimate Creatrix of the world. What instead of these is natural for him to think of is his victory over the enemy as also the territorial gain accruing out of it. To think of the eternal state of rest beyond the surge of creation and of the immortal primeval Light lying beyond all ideation is something possible only in the contemplation of the seer through exclusive concentration of the powers of the heart and mind, *hṛdā manīṣa* as the hymn of creation

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11 दाशराज्ञे परियत्ताय विश्वतः सुदासं इन्द्रावरुणावशिक्षतम्।
श्वित्यञ्चो यत्र नमसा कपर्दिनो धिया धीवन्तो असपन्त तृत्सवः।। *Ibid., VII.83.8.*

12 वृत्राण्यन्यः समिथेषु जिघ्नते व्रतान्यन्यो अभि रक्षते सदा।
हवामहे वां वृषणा सुवृक्तिभिरस्मे इन्द्रावरुणा शर्म यच्छतम्।। *Ibid., VII.83.9.*

13 अस्मे इन्दो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा द्युम्नं यच्छन्तु महि शर्म सप्रथः।
अवध्रं ज्योतिरदितेर्ऋतावृधो देवस्य श्लोकं सवितुर्मनामहे।। *Ibid., VII.83.10.*

points out,[14] and not in any lesser state of consciousness, not to talk of the tense situation of the battlefield where even the blinking of eye is likely to result in total loss of life.

This, however, does not mean to suggest that there is no possibility at all of any actual king named *Sudās* having ruled in ancient India as also of having faced certain enemies forming a combined front against him. If that were the case, the story of *Sudās* would have little possibility of extending beyond the hymn under consideration and still less outside the family of *Vasiṣṭha*, the seer of the hymn. But contrary to it, the fact is that *Sudās* has been referred to, though most frequently in the hymns seen by *Vasiṣṭha*, in mantras seen by not only *Viśvāmitra*, who was contemporaneous to *Vasiṣṭha*, but also by *Nodhā* of the family of *Gotama, Śyāvāśva* of the family of *Atri* and *Praskaṇva* of the family of *Kaṇva*. The latter, for instance, observes how the *Aśvins* brought wealth to *Sudās* on their chariot.[15] Similarly *Nodhā Gautama*, while praising *Indra*, states that the latter has wrecked completely the possessions of *Aṅhas* like the *Kuśa* grass in favour of *Sudās* besides demolishing the seven forts of the enemy in favour of *Purukutsa*.[16] *Viśvāmitra* even instructs his sons to get awakened and proceed to the capital of *Sudās* who has set free the horse for a certain attainment and as the King, he having killed *Vṛtra* from all sides, is performing the horse sacrifice at the prime spot of the earth.[17] *Vasiṣṭha* himself even much prior to this *Dāśarājña* hymn, talks of *Indra* crossing the *Sindhu*, killing *Bheda*, the arch enemy of *Sudās*, and protecting *Sudās* in the *Dāśarājña* war itself under the effect of the sacred mantra of the *Vasiṣṭhas*.[18]

From these references, it is quite evident that *Sudās* most probably was an actual king of great eminence at the time of at least *Vasiṣṭha* and *Viśvāmitra*. As is natural for a king of the ancient and medieval age at least, he is likely to have fought a crucial battle against the combined forces of his several enemies and come out victorious. But this by no

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14 सुतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन् हृदि प्रतीष्या कवयो मनीषा। *Ibid., X.129.4.*

15 सुदासे दस्रा वसु बिभ्रता रथे पृक्षो वहतमश्विना। *Ibid., I.47.6.*

16 त्वं ह त्यदिन्द्र सप्त युध्यन् पुरो वज्रिन् पुरुकुत्साय दर्दः।
बर्हिर्न यत् सुदासे वृथा वर्गहो राजन् वरिवः पूरवे कः।। *Ibid., I.63.7.*

17 उप प्रेत कुशिकाश्चेतयध्वमश्वं राये प्र मुञ्चता सुदासः।
राजा वृत्रं जङ्घनत् प्रागपागुदगथा यजाते वर आ पृथिव्याः।। *Ibid., III.53.11.*

18 एवेन्नु कं सिन्धुमेभिस्ततारैवेन्नु कं भेदमेभि र्जघान।
एवेन्नु कं दाशराज्ञे सुदासं प्रावदिन्द्रो ब्रह्मणा वो वसिष्ठाः।। *Ibid., VII.33.3.*

means is the end of the story, if we are not totally insensitive to the rest of the account relating to him. He, in the Veda, partly due to his eminence and good rule and partly owing to his name itself, has become rather a symbol of ideal human behaviour, attitude, and perfection. He has turned into an archetype of human perfection much above his actuality cognate to the pure mind lying beyond the reach of senses and above the sense-mind. It is in that capacity that his figure seems to have been used in the *Dāśarājña* hymn fighting against the ten enemies and aspiring for the state of infinitude and immortal light.

His name also has played a significant role in this transformation of his personality. Though it is difficult to decide whether it is original or a nickname, the word *sudās* being formed out of the prefix *su* and the root *da*, to give, to devote, imparts to the person concerned liberality and devotion of the highest order and these are two of the most cherished values held up by Vedic seers. Indeed it is these two values which have made the opening mantra of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* so important as to be regarded as the quintessence of the entire Vedic thought and teaching.[19] Admitting the Divine as the all-pervading reality, devoting oneself exclusively to It, and leading one's life perfectly in accordance with this realisation is what any *Sudās* is expected to do. As such, it is not only that in the Veda very often prayer has been made in favour of *Sudās* for making him to rise to the wider world[20] but also for the elevation of the seer himself on account of being a *sudās*. In one of his mantras *Vasiṣṭha*, for instance, prays to gods *Mitra, Varuṇa,* and *Aryaman* to lead him by the best possible paths so that even his enemy might tell *Sudās* that they would like to rejoice in aspiration under the protection of the Divine.[21] Here *Sudās* by virtue of his liberality and devotion to the Divine has become an ideal to emulate not only by the seer himself but also by the enemies who otherwise were dead against his way of life. The seer's aspiration to emulate the model of *Sudās* brings him close to his archetypal status and thus prepares the background of his transformation into the symbol of pure mind which has liberated itself

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19 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्।। *Īśa Up.1.*

20 हन्ता॑ वृ॒त्रमिन्द्रः॑ शू॒शु॒वानः॑ प्रावी॒न्नु वी॒रो ज॑रि॒तार॑मू॒ती।
कर्ता॑ सु॒दासे॒ अह॒ वा उ॑ लो॒कं दाता॒ वसु॒ मुहु॒रा दा॒शुषे॑ भूत्।। *Ibid., VII.20.2.*
परि॒द्वेषो॑भिरर्य॒मा वृ॑णक्तू॒रुं सु॒दासे॑ वृषणा उ लो॒कम्।। *Ibid., VII.60.9*

21 मि॒त्रस्तन्नो॒ वरु॑णो दे॒वो अ॒र्यः प्रसाधि॑ष्ठेभिः पु॒थिभि॑र्नयन्तु।
ब्रव॒द्यथा॑ न॒ आदु॒रिः सु॒दास॑ इ॒षा मदे॑म स॒ह दे॒वगो॑पाः।। *Ibid., VII.64.3.*

from the hold of senses and sense-mind and is inclined exclusively to the Divine. There are several other mantras bearing out the proposition that *Sudās* had already become a matter of emulation by seers themselves in regard to devotion to the Divine as well as liberality towards others. *Vasiṣṭha* himself, for instance, in one of the mantras seen by him observes that dwelling along with his sons under the protection which *Aditi, Mitra* and *Varuṇa* have provided to *Sudās*, he should not be negligent towards the Divine and to liberality.[22] Similarly in another mantra addressed to *Indra* the same *Vasiṣṭha* prays to the deity that he may provide *Sudās* with one hundred protections and one thousand admirations and benedictions, hurl his weapon on the wicked mortal and give the seer and people of his sort something shining and engaging.[23] *Śyāvāśva Ātreya* even earlier than *Vasiṣṭha* has inquired as to who that liberal devotee, *Sudās*, was for the sake of whom rains flowed down producing sacred food.[24] This *Sudās* of *Śyāvāśva* is obviously not the same as the King *Sudās*. In view of this, even when *Vasistha* himself observes that *Indra* made the flooded streams easily fordable for *Sudās*,[25] it is not necessary that he might be referring to *Sudās*, the king. He may as well be taken to refer to anyone having devotion and liberality.

All these details go cumulatively to show that the word *Sudās* occurs in the *Ṛgveda* in the generic sense of one having the qualities of devotion and liberality as well as the name of a particular king again having the same qualities. The use of the word in the generic sense is obviously earlier as it occurs in the mantra seen by *Śyāvāśva*. *Vasiṣṭha* himself uses the word in both the senses concurrently. In view of these facts, it is not difficult to understand that the *Dāśarājña* hymn may at least as well be symbolic as an account of an actual incident. Since explanation on actual lines is fraught with contradictions and omissions in contrast to the symbolic one which makes provision for everything embodied in the hymn, it is by far more appropriate to treat it as of symbolic character.

This hymn, indeed, is something like a prototype of the *Bhagavadgītā* inasmuch as here also the Divine comes to the rescue of the devout king

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22 यद् गोपावददितिः शर्म भद्रं मित्रो यच्छन्ति वरुणः सुदासे।
तस्मिन्ना तोकं तनयं दधानो मा कर्म देवहेळनं तुरासः।। *Ibid., VII.60.8.*

23 शतं ते शिप्रिन्नूतयः सुदासे सहस्रं शंसा उत रातिरस्तु।
जहि वधर्वनुषो मर्त्यस्यास्मे द्युम्नमधि रत्नं च धेहि।। *Ibid. VII.25.3.*

24 कस्मै सस्रुः सुदासे अन्वापय इळाभिर्वृष्टयः सह। *Ibid., V.53.2.*

25 अर्णांसि चित् पप्रथाना सुदास इन्द्रो गाधान्यकृणोत् सुपारा। *Ibid., VII.18.5.*

in the midst of a great crisis and makes him victorious in the odd situation of his having to fight by himself alone against the combined forces of ten kings. In this sense, he is like the *Arjuna* of the Gītā fighting against the *Kauravas* and their allies. It is significant to note that the *Bhagavadgītā* also has been taken very much in the symbolic sense by scholars going sometimes to the extent of treating it out and out as a creation of *Vyāsa's* mind without anything like the dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* having ever taken place actually at all. Under such assumption, *Kṛṣṇa* has been regarded to represent the divine Self while *Arjuna* the human. Such an explanation has led to suspecting the actuality of not only *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* but of the whole of the *Mahābhārata* along with the entire socio-political scenario associated with it.

This is obviously due to inadequacy in the understanding of symbols and their formations and functions. As a matter of fact, use of anything as a symbol does by no means nullify its actuality. It, on the contrary, reaffirms the actuality of the object or person concerned by bringing to the fore its or his latent potentialities through the symbolic usage. The famous symbolic statement *gaṅgāyām ghoṣaḥ* , the cowherd's village in the *Ganga*, does not negate the actuality either of *Gaṅgā* as a river or of the cowherd's village as a settlement of the people of a certain class, and yet it successfully communicates the intended sense of sanctity. Even so, when *Kṛṣṇa* comes to symbolise the Divine and *Arjuna* the human self, neither of them has the necessity of losing his actuality. Rather, over and above their actuality, they, through this symbolic usage, go to elucidate co-existence of the human and the divine selves in the human frame itself like the two birds sitting on the self-same tree, as the Vedic seer *Dīrghatamas* has already envisioned.

This line of symbolic usage of actual objects, persons and incidents goes back to the Veda according a certain degree of feasibility to the historical interpretation along with the spiritual, sacrificial etc., pre-dating even *Yāska*, as evident from the latter's mention of *Aitihāsikas* representing an established school of Vedic interpretation.

Sarama-Pani Dialogue

If we were to look into the accounts of paths and their trackings occurring in the *Saṁhitā* in various narratives in the light of the above analysis of the path, particularly as one related to *Ṛta*, we may be able to explain several otherwise puzzling things with a certain degree of certainty. One such spot in the Veda is the dialogue between *Saramā* and *Paṇis*. The widely spread view about this dialogue at present is that it is a product of the confrontation between the aborigines of India addressed as non-Aryans and the newcomers to it approximately about two thousand B.C. and known as Aryans. In course of the confrontation, the non-Aryans might have cornered some of the cows of their enemies and kept them concealed in a mountainous cavern to which they might have receded at that stage of their conflict. *Indra*, from this viewpoint, is just the leader of the Aryans or at the most a personification of the spectacle of cloud and rain favourable to the Aryans as they offered to him in plenty a kind of beverage called *Soma*. In this scheme of things, *Saramā* would be just an imaginary character given the fictitious form of a bitch on account of the latter's high power of smelling and detection.

The basic difficulty with the above postulate is that it has nothing positive in the entire range of the Vedic literature to support it except the scenario of confrontation between two forces supposedly forming the central theme of the accounts in the Veda. Any plausible explanation of the conflict has obviously not to come from sheer concoction and imputation of ignorance to seers but through due consideration of the views of seers themselves taking them as to have described things quite meaningfully. Denial of this much consideration to the authors of the oldest and most lasting classic of the world is the deadliest injustice to the literature itself.

To come to the dialogue with this precaution, we find it opening with the questioning of *Saramā* by *Paṇis* as to the object of her desire motivated by which she has taken the trouble to track such a long distance including the perilous crossing of the river *Rasā*. In response to this query, *Saramā* tells them that she is the messenger of *Indra* and has moved out to recover from them the precious things they had kept concealed with them. As regards the crossing of the river *Rasā*, that could be accomplished on account of the river's fear of transgression from *Indra*. Having heard of *Indra*, they inquired of her as to what *Indra* was of the sort as whose messenger she had come from such a long distance. They also proposed in the same breath that if *Indra* were to come to them they would make him their friend and would also make him owner of their cows. *Saramā*,

however, replied that *Indra*, as the messenger of whom she had come from such a long distance, was indomitable and that therefore he could not be subdued to accept their proposal of compromise going against his determination to recover all the cows they had kept concealed. She further told them that even deep streams of water were not capable of drowning him, not to talk of lesser obstacles. As such, she warned them that if they went against his wish, they would lie dead for ever.

But, undeterred, the *Paṇis* told her that the cows in search of whom she had come from such a long distance as the heaven, could not be rescued without fighting and that their own weapons were too sharp to succeed against.

Saramā replied to them with the rebuke that their words betrayed their unsoldierliness while their bodies were not capable of withstanding the onslaught of arrows as they were full of sins. She further told them that if they were under the impression that the path leading to them was anyway difficult to traverse, that would not present any difficulty to *Bṛhaspati* in reaching there. Be it reaching there or fighting against them, warned she, neither was difficult for *Bṛhaspati.*

To this, the *Paṇis* replied that the wealth replete with cows, horses and precious gems was kept concealed at the bottom of the mountain and *Paṇis*, efficient in guarding it, had been appointed to safeguard it. As such, they told her that she had come to that place all in vain.

Saramā's reply to that challenge was that she was fully confident that seers like *Ayāsya, Āṅgirasas* and *Navagvas* had already reached the place, howsoever secret, at least under the effect of *Soma* and had taken a share of the cows from that place of hiding and the *Paṇis* would have to accept the veracity of the statement.

At this stage, trying to seduce her, the *Paṇis* told her that she had understandably approached them under the strict order of the divinity and by no means on her own accord. As such, they offered to own her as their sister, promising to give her a share of the cows and suggested that she, therefore, should not go back to *Indra.*

Saramā replied that she herself knew neither of brotherhood nor of sisterhood and that all this was known to *Indra* and the *Āṅgirasas.* It was out of their desire for cows that she had been sent to them, she told them

and suggested to them to better move away from the spot. Stressing the same point further, she asked them to go away so that the cows might move lowing as per the law of creation as they had already been discovered by *Bṛhaspati, Soma,* pressing stones and enlightened seers.[1]

It is evident from the dialogue that the story underlying it cannot be treated as realistic. *Indra* cannot be taken as a person having cows liable to theft etc. *Paṇis* also cannot be taken as a clan of human beings being in the need of cows. *Saramā*, as a bitch, coming from the heaven down to the earth with the message of *Indra* is also not probable in any realistic sense. In view of these difficulties involved in the realistic interpretation of the story, some other way out has to be discovered for its understanding.

The story cannot be treated as a concoction of the mind of the seer, whosoever, no matter she be *Saramā* herself, who traditionally is regarded as the seer of it. Had it been so, the story should not have been referred to anywhere else in the *Saṁhitā* at least in those portions of it which have been supposed to be earlier than the one in which this hymn is located. It is relevant to point out here that the first and the tenth *maṇḍalas* of the *Saṁhitā* have been regarded as latest additions to it while the *maṇḍalas* second to seventh have been treated as the earliest ones. In the tenth *maṇḍala* also, the latter half of it, in which the hymn in question is located, has by all means been considered as the latest addition. As against this textual position, the story of *Saramā* and *Paṇi* has been referred to in such early *maṇḍalas* as the second and the third. These references obviously bear out the deep-rootedness of the motif in the psyche of the Vedic seer.

It is also not that these earlier references to the story are anyway relatively crude which might have got refined in the dialogue. On the contrary, what appears to be the real fact is that the dialogue itself is an artistic elaboration on the basic points suggested in these earlier references. For instance, the earliest reference to this story in the *Saṁhitā*, as per the textual scheme determined by the critical scholarship, is found in a mantra seen by *Gṛtsamada* in the second *maṇḍala* of it. This mantra states that seers moved around incessantly in search of some wealth of highest value and found it eventually as concealed in the cave of the *Paṇis*. What they found out, however, was not cows but truth as

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1 *Ṛgveda X.108.1-11.*

discerned out of falsehood. Interestingly enough, in this mantra there is no reference at all to *Indra* and his cows, much less to *Saramā*, notwithstanding clear mention of *Paṇis* and their cave.[2]

Another reference to *Paṇis* is to be found in the third *mandala* of the *Saṁhitā*. This *maṇḍala* is the work of *Viśvāmitra* and his family. He is one of the earliest and most celebrated seers of the Vedic age. His account of the incident is a little more elaborate spreading over two contiguous mantras. He starts his account with the great difficulty involved in breaking the blocks of stone in the mountain which, according to him, were pierced through by wise seers, seven in number. In this difficult task, the means they applied in breaking the blocks of stone was not anything else but their mind. In this way, the seer observes, they found out the whole path leading to *Ṛta*, the principle of universal order, since they had set out in the discovery of the path, as also of the cows with full prior knowledge of them.[3]

The next mantra brings in the name of *Saramā* as the discoverer of the cleavage in the mountain, perhaps the same as was made by the seven seers through the instrumentality of their mind. It is significant to note that *Saramā* is not the creator of the cleavage. The latter was created by the seers themselves prior to *Saramā's* coming in the picture. This point finds mention in the dialogue hymn also. While pleading with the *Paṇis* for releasing the cows she observed that seers like *Ayāsya, Āṅgirasas* and *Navagvas* had already gone to that cave under the exhilaration of *Soma* and had shared the cows with the *Paṇis*.[4] She stressed this point again in the last mantra of the hymn while suggesting to them to better move away to some other place and let the cows go freely out of the cave since they had already been sensed by *Bṛhaspati, Soma*, pressing stones and the seers.[5] Evidently, the real task of cleaving the mountain has been accomplished by the seers themselves under the guidance of *Bṛhaspati*

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2 अभि नक्षन्तो अभि ये तमानशुर्निधिं पणीनां परमं गुहा हितम्।
ते विद्वांसः प्रतिचक्ष्यानृता पुनर्यत उ आयन्तदुदीयुरविशम्।। *Ibid., II.24.6.*

3 वीळौ सतीरुभि धीरा अतृन्दन् प्राचा हिन्वन् मनसा सप्त विप्राः।
विश्वामविन्दन् पथ्यामृतस्य प्रजानन्नित्ता नमसा विवेश।। *Ibid., III.31.5.*

4 एह गमन्नृषयः सोमशिता अयास्यो अंगिरसो नवग्वाः।
त एतमूर्वं विभजन्त गोनामथैतद्वचः पणयो वमन्नित्।। *Ibid., X.108.8.*

5 दूरमित पणयो वरीय उदगावो यन्तु मिनतीर्ऋतेन।
बृहस्पतिर्या अविन्दन्निगूळहाः सोमो ग्रावाण ऋषयश्च विप्राः।। *Ibid., X.108.11.*

and exhilaration of *Soma* made available to them through toil of the pressing stone. So much sensitivity as to acknowledge the visit of not only *Soma* taken by the seers prior to cleaving the mountain but also of the pressing stones which might have been used in that particular act of pressing shows how the seer was precise and factual in his recording as also how significant they proved in this momentous discovery. Had the seers not already tasted *Soma*, they could not have been able to cleave the mountain by their mind. The use of singular *manasa* instead of the plural *manobhih*, which ought to have been used otherwise in view of the plurality of the seers, suggests not only to the singularity of their determination but also to the extraordinary depth of mind involved in the task. Needless to point out that all minds melt together in oneness at the deepest end of the mental phenomenon.

Thus, in this mantra, *Saramā* is mentioned not as discoverer of the resort of cows, as it had already been discovered by the seven seers, but as consolidator of the discovery. This is clearly evident from the adjective *sadhryak kah, pūrvyam* for the *pāthaḥ*, the way, as well as from the words did the work of consolidation.

The second hemistich of the mantra is still more significant. It offers a number of clues to the real meaning of the legend. *Saramā* has been characterised here as *supadī*, sure-footed, and is said to have led the initial one of the imperishable ones. She is also at the same time said to have reached the sound for the first time having prior cognisance of it.[6] What are these `imperishable ones'? As per the context, they have got to be taken as the cows kept confined to the cave by the *Paṇis*. But, as a matter of fact, immortal cows cannot be cows at all.

The word *akṣara*, indeed, occurs in the *Saṁhitā* about nine times and, interestingly enough, in all these occurrences it is related basically with the phenomenon of word, particularly the sacred word cognised as such in the Veda. For instance, in the famous mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas*, this word is described as the creator of the basic stuff of creation and as having multiplied from the monosyllabic to the thousand-syllabic status in the highest heaven.[7] In another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*, the *akṣara*

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6 विदद्यदी सरमा रुग्णमद्रेर्महि पाथः पूर्व्यं सध्र्यक्कः। *Ibid., III.31.6.*

7 अत्रा नयत् सुपद्यक्षराणामच्छा खं प्रथमा जानती गात्। *Ibid., I.164.41.*
गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन्।

is closely associated with the stall of cows; it indeed is said to get manifested from there.[8] This description obviously is based on the lowing of cows at the time of the dawn. This coincidence has been utilised by the seer in showing the coincidence of manifestation of the reality and the verbal expression of it at the metaphysical level. It has also been utilised equally well in showing the coincidence of spiritual illumination and manifestation of the sacred word.

This close association of the cow with the sacred word, thus, seems to underlie *Viśvāmitra's* account of *Saramā* leading the foremost of the imperishable ones in the mantra concerned. The imperishable ones of this mantra are no doubt cows of *Indra* but instead of cows they are really the mantras of wisdom as revealed to seers as a result of their accomplishment of the arduous task. This interpretation finds further confirmation in one of mantras seen by *Brhaspati* himself who, as has already been made out, is closely associated with the task of rescuing the cows from the cave of the *Paṇis*. If *Viśvāmitra's* mantra under discussion makes use of *akṣarāṇām agram* for what was sought by *Saramā* to drive out of the *Paṇi's* cave, *Bṛhaspati's* mantra makes use of *vaco agram* for what got manifested bearing the names from the mysterious cave.[9] In the third mantra hence, again, it has been stated that the knowledgeable persons went to the original seat of word by means of sacrifice and discovered it eventually from within seers.[10] Lastly, in the fifth mantra of the same hymn, the phenomenon of fruitfulness or otherwise of sacred word or mantra is brought home through the analogy of the cow yielding or not yielding the milk to her keeper. It has been stated here that one who does not understand the meaning of the mantra is like the owner of a cow which, though a cow, is no cow at all, or if a cow, it is just an illusion of a cow.[11]

That this story of *Saramā* and *Paṇi* is really a figurative account of acquisition of higher consciousness by mankind under the leadership of the *Āṅgirasas* is borne out by a hymn seen by *Sadāpṛṇa Ātreya*. The hymn opens with the account how, on invocation of seers, *Indra* cleaved

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8 उषसः पूर्वा अध यद् व्यूषुर्महद् विजज्ञे अक्षरं पदे गोः। *Ibid., III.55.1.*

9 बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं यत्प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः।
यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत् प्रेणा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः।। *Ibid., X.71.1.*

10 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टाम्।। *Ibid., X.71.3.*

11 अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम्।। *Ibid., X.71.5.*

the mountains, as a consequence of which the imminent dawns cast their lustre, the fleeting nights turned away, the sun rose up the doors of human beings were opened by the divine.[12] This account, at the first sight, appears as nothing but a vivid description of the end of night, coming of dawn, rising of the sun and opening of the doors of human settlements. This viewpoint goes on getting confirmed by the next four mantras also to a great extent. The suspicion, however, begins to creep in with the sixth mantra where it has been observed that the mantra which is being produced here is really released from the enclosure of cows by the mother and that it was by means of this mantra that *Manu* defeated the jawless and the wandering merchants got possession of what was fulfilling.[13] Who is this *Manu*? What is the enclosure of the cows? How is it that what gets released out of the enclosure of cows turns to be a mantra? Who is the jawless defeated by *Manu*? And lastly, who is this wandering merchant who has happened to get possession of the fulfilling object? These references obviously add another dimension to the otherwise seemingly flat description of the natural phenomena. With the addition of these references, the natural phenomena begin to point to something else beyond themselves. That something, as well as the answer to these questions, finds its way out in the sequel with the introduction of the theme of *Saramā* searching out the cows from the cave of *Paṇis*.

The next mantra tells us that in this connection the slab of stone used by the seers known as *Navagva* in course of their worship for ten months produced a certain sound and *Saramā* moving by *Ṛta*, the Universal Order, found out the cows and thus *Aṅgirasa* came to have discovered the integral truth.[14]

It is significant to note that in this mantra the word *adri*, meaning basically mountain, turns out to be the slab of stone used for crushing and pressing out the *Soma* juice. Here instead of the mountain letting out from its cave the lowing voice of cows and attracting *Saramā* to the cave, it is the slab of stone which is producing the mantra which was used by

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12 विदा दिवो विष्यन्नद्रिमुक्थैरायत्या उषसो अर्चिनो गुः।
अपावृत व्रजिनीरुत् स्वर्गाद्विदुरो मानुषीर्देव ओवः।। *Ibid., V.45.1.*

13 एतां धियं कृणवामा सखायोऽप या माता ऋणुत व्रजं गोः।
ययां मनुर्विशिशिप्रं जिगाय ययां वणिग्वङ्कुरापा पुरीषम्।। *Ibid., 45.6.*

14 अनूनोदत्र हस्तयतो अद्रिरार्चन् येन दश मासो नवग्वाः।
ऋतं यती सरमा गा अविन्दद्विश्वानि सत्यांगिराश्चकार।। *Ibid., V.45.7.*

Navagvas in their worship for ten months leading ultimately *Saramā* to discover the cows and verify the truth found out by *Āṅgirasas*.

This account explains well also the association of *Soma* and pressing stone with the discovery of cows as mentioned in the mantra quoted at *footnote 5* above. Thus, the pressing stone is symbolic of the mountain in which cows are kept confined while the rhythmic sound produced by it in course of crushing *Soma* stands for lowing voice of the cows or indeed for the cows themselves.

That it is the sound produced by the pressing stone which stands for the cow, gets confirmed readily by the next mantra in which *Angirasas* are said to have uttered their prayer through cows at the emergence of the glorious dawn. The real source of these cows, as per the second hemistich of the mantra, lies in the highest unitary abode. That is why, the mantra concludes, *Saramā* found out the cows by treading along the path of *Ṛta*.[15] Thus, the sound produced by the pressing stone comes to be treated as the cow used by *Angirasas* as prayers at the emergence of the glorious dawn. These cows, however, are not ordinary ones. They are divine in their origin. Their source is the same highest unitary abode which elsewhere has been termed as *parame vyoman*, highest heaven, from which emerge mantras, as seer *Dīrghatamas* points out.[16] Thus, these two mantras also bear out equivalence of the prayer with the cow.

In view of the above details, we are now in a better position to understand the symbolism involved in the *Saramā-Paṇi* dialogue. In this dialogue, cow stands for the Vedic wisdom embodied in mantras. She has been chosen to symbolise this wisdom particularly on account of the latter's nourishing quality. Just as cow's milk is the best nourishment for the human body, even so Vedic wisdom is capable of providing the best nourishing food to the human mind. This wisdom being embodied in mantras, it was but natural to use cow to symbolise them.

Now mantras themselves are not of ordinary origin. Apparently they seem to have their origin in such acts as pressing of *Soma*. In fact, there are very many mantras which refer directly not only to the act of pressing,

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15 विश्वे॑ अ॒स्या व्यु॒षि मा॑हि॒नाया॒ः सं यद् गोभि॒रांगि॑रसो॒ नव॑न्त।
उत्सं॑ आ॒सां पर॑मे स॒धस्थ॑ ऋ॒तस्य॑ प॒था स॒रमा॑ विद॒द्गाः।। *Ibid., V.45.8.*

16 ऋ॒चो अ॒क्षरे॑ पर॒मे व्यो॑म॒न्। *Ibid.,I.164.39.*

squeezing and purifying *Soma* but also to the sound of pressing stone besides identifying themselves with that sound. But that is only the apparent view of things. Really the mantra is born not out of the pressing stone but out of the mind of the seer himself, the sound of the pressing stone serving only as a stimulant. The human mind itself is not a simple thing. It is something most mysterious range, as it does, from senses up its coincidence with the supernal. While our ordinary behaviour is regulated by the exterior of the mind and our reasoning and intellection by its intermediate part, the real wisdom or mantra emerges from what may be considered as its inmost, deepest or highest reach which forms its crux. Since this crux of the mind coincides with the crux of the reality, mantras very often, as one quoted right now, are said to have their origin in the highest heaven, where gods like *Indra, Bṛhaspati*, etc., co-exist with them.

This is why they are said to be the cows of these gods, particularly of *Indra*. Due to their supernal character, their transmission to the human understanding involves several dangers including their non-cognisance, misunderstanding and wayward interception. While general incompetence or perversity of the human mind involved in the reception of these mantras may be the reason behind their non-cognisance and misunderstanding, his wayward propensity or beings corresponding to it operating on the universal canvas may be taken as the agencies of midway interception. *Paṇis* are the embodiment of this propensity or representative of the corresponding agency. It is this agency which is described by *Sadāpṛṇa Ātreya* in the mantra quoted at *footnote13* above as *vanik vanku*, the wayward merchant. This is why *Yāska* has observed that *paṇih vanig bhavati*, that is, *Paṇi* is the merchant. Really they are not businessmen but the propensity of mind behaving like the merchant characterised by conservation and undue profiteering. Such propensity may not be exclusive to man but may be ingrained in the nature of things itself. This is why *Paṇis* are said to have intercepted the cows midway while they were descending from the heaven and were kept confined in the cave. If we may be permitted the liberty of interpreting this part of the story in modern psychological terms with necessary modifications, we may pretty well identify *Paṇi's* cave with the unconscious of the human mind, particularly the collective one as made out by *C.G. Jung*, which harbours within it immense wisdom of colossal dimensions and is not prepared to let them come to the conscious mind ordinarily. So do the *Paṇis*. The cows of wisdom are restlessly lowing in their cave but are not allowed to come out even on the intervention of *Saramā*.

This account has the possibility of interpretation from a viewpoint more fundamental than the psychological. The contemplated viewpoint is cosmogonic. Since the Vedas at every step go deep down to the root of the creation and always claim to belong to that root, there is full justification for any such interpretation. From this viewpoint, the cows of *Indra* kept confined in the cave may be taken as symbolic of the fact of matter having within it in a latent form the entire possibility of future developments in the form of life, mind and higher consciousness. The theory of evolution tells us that it is out of matter that life and mind have grown. The problem is that matter could not have given rise to life and mind from within it, had it not all these present in it in a latent form, for it is only nothing which can come out of nothing. Prior presence of life etc. in matter would, however, necessarily presuppose entrance of these elements of opposite nature in matter at some earlier stage in the process of creation. So must also be the case with the higher wisdom. *Paṇi's* cave yielding cows of wisdom on the intervention of *Indra* and *Bṛhaspati* may, therefore, be taken as an allegorical way of stating how matter has given rise from within it eventually to the higher wisdom which is yet to be owned by mankind in general and is lying there in the Veda. If the wisdom has descended from the supernal source of creation only to get manifested in the latter, it should automatically have revealed itself in course of the process without any effort from any section of the creation, just as it happens in the case of life and the ordinary sort of consciousness getting channelled in the behavioural wisdom. But since coming down to this advanced stage, the range of alternatives grows larger, there is always the danger of miscarriage in the form of some mishap taking place. *Paṇi's* interception of the cows and keeping them confined to their cave, thus, may be taken as an illustration of that probable mishap. If so, the cave would symbolise matter having concealed in it higher wisdom as well as principles of life and mind so as to manifest them gradually in course of time.

This interpretation gets sufficient support from references to *Ṛta* in the context of discovering the cows. It need not be pointed any more that *Ṛta* is the principle of universal order guiding the destiny of creation from within the creative process itself. In the hierarchy of beings, it is next only to Creator Himself. It indeed is His first product and therefore the most intimate, constant and universal instrument of creation. *Saramā's* pleading with *Paṇis*, therefore, that they should keep off the cows so that the latter may move onwards lowing as per the imperative of *Ṛta* on them, may very well be taken to suggest to the cosmogonic dimension of the

story, as is evident from the mantra quoted at *footnote No.3* above. The same again gets confirmed by the mantras quoted at *footnote No.14 and 15*· where it has been observed that *Saramā* found out the cows proceeding by the law of *Ṛta*. The law of *Ṛta* is not anything arbitrary permitting anything to happen in a haphazard way or order. It is universal and perfectly settled in the mode of its working. If *Saramā* is said to have found out the cows proceeding as per the provisions of *Ṛta*, the event of rescuing the cows naturally tends to become cosmogonic in its thrust. In that case, *Paṇis* would be the forces of obstruction in the descent of the supernal wisdom to the world. A direct reference to such a probable obstruction in the way of descent of such a divine wisdom is noticeable in one of *Viśvāmitra's* mantras where he prays to *Agni* to impart unhindered to mankind that wisdom which might be beneficial as well as sharp, besides being universal, like the stream of water descending unhindered from the mountain and quenching the thirst of all.[17]

Coming to this perspective, *Saramā* as one of the main characters of the story also needs an explanation. She is the seer of the hymn giving the account of her dialogue with the *Paṇis*. In this hymn, nowhere has she been mentioned as the bitch nor anywhere else in the *Samhitā*. There is a solitary reference, however, in *Ṛgveda X.14.10* where a pair of dogs belonging to *Yama* have been called *Sārameya*, those born of *Saramā*. It is on the basis of this Vedic evidence that she has been regarded as a bitch. But just as the cow of *Indra* is no cow at all, even so the bitch of *Indra* must not be a bitch. If she has been given the form of a bitch, that obviously is due to her species being even-footed, extraordinarily sharp in smelling and hearing, and having been used traditionally by mankind in the search of animals, one's own or of prey. As a matter of fact, she must symbolise a certain force inherent in the cosmic scheme of things or equally well in the human psyche deep down on that point where it comes to coincide with the region of the divine, both indeed signifying one and the same thing. The word *Saramā* has incontrovertibly been derived from the root *sṛ*, to flow. *Yāska* also concurs with this derivation when he observes: *Saramā saraṇāt*. As such, she must be extremely mobile, so much mobile, of course, as to apprehend and intercept anything going wayward, as really the dog does by means of its extraordinary speed as well as hearing and smelling powers. *Sāyaṇa* while commenting on

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17 या ते॑ अग्ने॒ पर्व॑तस्येव॒ धारा॑सश्चन्ती॑ पी॒पय॑द् देव चि॒त्रा।
ताम॒स्मभ्यं॒ प्रम॑तिं जातवेदो॒ वसो॒ रास्व॑ सु॒मति॑ं वि॒श्वज॑न्याम्।। *Ibid., III.57.6.*

Ṛgveda V.45.7, already referred to, identifies her with *Vāk* in the form of prayer.[18] The prayer with which *Saramā* is sought to be identified by *Sāyaṇa*, however, must be of divine origin, as she comes down to the cave from *Indra*. But so also are the cows, as we have seen in course of the discussion. As such, though belonging to one and the same *Indra*, both *Saramā* and cows must represent things different from each other. Taking into account the marked difference in the functions of the two animals, we may venture to say that while cows of *Indra* symbolise the Vedic wisdom providing spiritual subsistence to mankind, *Saramā* is the pure conscience keeping watch on that wisdom. The wisdom, if left to itself, is so innocent as likely to be hijacked by the forces of evil. It is only the pure divine conscience which can save it from being led astray. This character of hers gets very much revealed in the story through the contrivance of *Paṇis* to dissuade her from her basic character of her faithfulness to her master, that is, *Indra* by offering her a number of cows if she broke her faithfulness to *Indra*. Obviously this was an attempt made by the forces of evil to kill the conscience which *Saramā* represented.

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18 सरमा सरणशीला स्तुतिरूपा वाक्। *Sāyaṇa's Commentary on RV.V.45.7.*

Path

There are several words used in the sense of *path* in the Veda. They are *adhvan, pantha, pāthas* besides *patha* itself. The English word *path* itself is nothing but the Sanskrit *pāthas* or *patha* formed by dropping the ending *as* or *a*, as the case be. This intactness of the word through the ages and long the distance it traversed in course of those ages, bears out its suitability in regard to what it is used to signify as well as the convenience in its pronunciation. This word originally signifies the track traversed in space. The word used in this basic sense may, therefore, be considered as realistic. When, however, it comes to be used for some such track in time, world of ideas, life, morality and spirituality, it cannot but be taken as symbolic. Symbolism, indeed, to a great extent, is the transference of the signification of a word from the basic to a different order of things or ideas. Accordingly when a spatial expression comes to signify something temporal, vital, mental or spiritual, it naturally gets removed from its primary context to signify secondarily something of an entirely secondary order creating thus a new track of ideation and interest.

As regards the case of usage of this word in the barely realistic sense, there are several instances of it in the Veda, though these also are considerably removed from the context of the earth in which alone the word must obviously have had its original signification. Incidentally, all of them relate to movement in the space intermediate to the heaven and the earth. One of them refers to the course of movement of *Vāyu*, air, through the mid-region. In this mantra, the god of air is visualised as moving along the mid-region without resting even for a while and letting one know the place of his origin.[1] If in this case the context of *path* has been shifted from the earth to the intermediate space, there is another mantra addressed to *Uşas* in which besides the above kind of shifting, it has been made to incline equally well to time also. Regarding a particular dawn in the long series of trillions of them, it has been stated that it follows the *path* of those who have already passed along and at the same time comes in the beginning of those who have yet to appear in future.[2]

What a wonderful vision, suggestive as it is of the relativity of things! Out

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1 अन्तरिक्षे पथिभिरीयमानो न नि विशते कतमच्चनाहः।
अपां सखा प्रथमजा ऋतावा क्व स्विज्जातः कुतः आ बभूव।। *RV.X.168.3.*

2 परायतीनामन्वेति पाथ आयतीनां प्रथमा शश्वतीनाम्। *Ibid.I.113.8.*

of the long row of trillions of dawns, excepting the first and the last ones, if the things are taken in a linear way, all others initiate as well as follow the rest, and if the row is rounded, even those two come to follow the suit of the rest.

Similarly, there is another mantra in the *Saṁhitā* where it is recounted how night gives way to dawn and how both being rich in horses and cows may take away the element of violence from the people.[3] Being the augerer of day, dawn is symbolic of it. Now day and night are as diametrically opposed to each other as are the white and the black. In spite of this opposition, however, when the appropriate moment comes, the black gives way to the white most cordially as is suggested by the lovely appearance of the dawn. In view of this sort of working of the divine through the natural spectacle, all adverse forces active in the human psyche as well as in the human society may very well be expected to get reconciled within themselves by getting rid of their stings. In course of this significant observation the seer notes how night gives way to day. As the idea of way or *path* here has got its character changed from the spatial to the temporal in spite of the spectacle of the darkness giving way to the brightness of the dawn in the horizon, the usage of *path* here may be treated as half realistic and half symbolic.

There is yet another mantra in which *path* has been used rather more realistically and that also in regard to the dawn itself. It has been observed in this mantra that the beautiful dawn is moving ahead awakening people and making their paths easy to traverse.[4] Here, obviously, *path* stands for the actual track on the surface of the earth made visible owing to the shining of the dawn. Similar is the case of another mantra where *Maruts* are prayed to make all paths auspicious, whether they be on solid ground, sandy desert and waters or leading to the ferocious battlefield.[5] So is the case with another mantra where it is prayed that the path may be made wide for man, cows and chariot.[6]

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3 अप॒ स्वसु॑रुष॒सो नग्जि॑हीते रि॒णक्ति॑ कृ॒ष्णीर॑रु॒पाय॒ पन्था॑म्।
अश्वा॑मघा॒ गोम॑घा॒ वां हु॒वेम॒ दिवा॒ नक्तं॒ शरु॑मस्मद् यु॒योत॑म्।।*Ibid., VII.71.1.*

4 ए॒षा जनं॑ दर्श॒ता बो॒धय॑न्ती सु॒गान्प॒थः कृ॑ण्व॒ती या॒त्यग्रे॑।
बृ॒ह॒द्दधा बृ॑ह॒ती वि॑श्वमि॒न्वोषा ज्योति॑र्यच्छ॒त्यग्रे॒ अह्ना॑म्।।*Ibid., V.80.2.*

5 स्व॒स्ति नः॑ प॒थ्या॑सु धन्व॑सु स्व॒स्त्यप्सु॑ वृ॒जने॒ स्व॑र्वति।*Ibid., X.63.15.*

6 उ॒रुं नृभ्य॑ उ॒रुं गवे॑ उ॒रुं रथा॑य॒ पन्था॑म्।।*Ibid., VIII..68.13.*

As distinct from such usages, there is a large number of them where *path* has been used decisively in the secondary and therefore symbolic sense. Several of such usages are of ethical nature. In a mantra addressed to *Agni*, for instance, it has been prayed that the divinity may mobilise wealth to reach the worshipper along straight paths as also to purge him of all his sins along the same paths.[7] Likewise there is another mantra in which various gods give words of guidance so that people in general may not be drawn away from the traditional *path* made by *Manu*, the great grandfather of mankind.[8] Obviously here *path* does not remain anymore the physical *path* on the surface of the ground. It gets transformed into the *path* of morality enlightened by higher spirituality as it is prepared by *Manu*, one of the pre-eminent Vedic seers. Such radical transformation must have required considerable period of maturation of ideas and expressions on the part of the seer, so much so of course, that mankind even until now has been making use of those very expressions for conveying its highest possible ideas and has not been able to go any further beyond them.

In the same way it has also been observed in another mantra that having been furnished with metres, groups of mantras as well as perceptive intellect and wisdom, the seven divinely inspired seers, after visualising the *path* of their predecessors, took up the string of knowledge like the charioteer the reins.[9] Here the word *pantham* has been used in the sense of the track so wide and smooth as to serve well for the movement of chariots and that also since the time of forefathers. The basic sense of the word, however, gets transformed in the mantra by its use in an entirely different area of understanding relating to the tradition of transmission of knowledge from one generation of seers to the other.

There is another mantra in which several gods such as *Indra, Maruts, Pūṣan* and *Bhaga* have been prayed to collectively use their discretion in selecting the *path* mankind has to traverse for its smooth movement.[10]

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7 नू नो॑ अग्नेऽवृ॒केभिः॑ स्व॒स्ति वेषि॑ रा॒यः प॒थिभि॒ः पर्ष्यं॑हः। *Ibid., VI.4.8.*

8 ते न॑स्त्राध्वं॒ तेऽ॑वत॒ त उ॑ नो॒ अधि॑ वोचत।
मा नः॑ प॒थः पित्र्या॑न्मान॒वादधि॑ दू॒रं नै॑ष्ट परा॒वतः॑।। *Ibid., VIII.30.3*

9 स॒ह स्तो॑माः स॒हछ॑न्दस आ॒वृतः॑ स॒ह प्र॑मा॒ ऋष॑यः स॒प्त दैव्या॑ः ।
पूर्ष्वे॑षां॒ पन्था॑मनु॒दृश्य॒ धीरा॑ अ॒न्वाले॑भिरे र॒थ्यो३॒॑न र॒श्मीन्।। *Ibid., X.130.7*

10 वि नः॑ प॒थः सु॑वि॒ताय॑ चि॒यन्त्विन्द्रो॑ म॒रुतः।
पू॒षा भगो॒ वन्द्या॑सः।। *Ibid., I.90.4.*

Here *path* obviously means the *path* of life enlightened by farsightedness and moral uprightness. Similarly in another mantra seen by an entirely different seer but couched in kindred words, *Pūşan* has been prayed to select carefully the *path*, remove obstructions in it and bring maturity to the seer's power of understanding so that he may acquire strength.[11]

There is another mantra addressed to *Pūşan* in which the latter has been prayed to drive away the wicked wolf from the *path* of the seer as it is staring at him inauspiciously.[12] A sure clue to the understanding of the symbolism of this mantra is provided by another seer of the *Samhitā* who prays to *Indra* to the effect that he may not deviate from the *path* of sacrifice drenched with *Soma* as also that the enemies lying within him as well as within others may be driven away.[13] Needless to mention that the wicked wolf of the earlier mantra is really the symbolic representation of the enemies of this mantra and the *path* from which that wolf is supposed to be driven away is the *path* of sacrifice of this mantra. As such, the *path* of both the mantras is symbolical of the life of detachment, dedication and divine orientation. Such a life has been symbolised in another mantra by the course of the sun and the moon who after traversing the sky come back day after day and night after night in the midst of respective heavenly bodies of their own circles and are received as well as ever.[14] Reception of the sun and the moon by the heavenly bodies of their respective circles is symbolical of the desired reception of the seer and his associates or indeed of those who follow such a course of life by others coming into their contact while the course of movement of these heavenly bodies stands for the contemplated ideal course of life.

This ideal course of life is equated with the behaviour of mighty forces of nature, on the one hand, and has been symbolised by the *path* of sacrifice on the other. In this complex symbolism, while sacrifice is symbolical of the happening in nature and man's response to them, *path* is symbolical

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11 वि पथो वाजसातये चिनुहि वि मृधो जहि।
साधन्तामुग्रा नो धियः।। *Ibid., VI.53.4.*

12 यो नः पूषन्नघो वृको दुःशेव आदिदेशति।
अप स्म तं पथो जहि।। *Ibid., I.42.2.*

13 मा प्र गाम पथो वयं मा यज्ञादिन्द्र सोमिनः।
मान्तः स्थुर्नो अरातयः।। *Ibid., X.57.1.*

14 स्वस्ति पन्थामनुचरेम सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव।
पुनर्ददताघ्नता जानता सं गमेमहि।। *Ibid., V.51.15.*

of the sacrifice itself. *Path* indeed is the way available to the person concerned for moving out and going in the attainment of one's objective. Paths may be many not only as per the diversity of the objectives but for the attainment of even a single objective. Someone of them may be shorter but not sure of success while someone else may be sure of success but relatively longer. Likewise someone may be longer but easy to tread while the other may be shorter but difficult to take to. Taking into account this diversity of possibilities on the physical plane, the seer makes use of it inwardly to the basic course of life and settles down on sacrifice as the surest one in this regard. He formulates his decision in this regard through the symbol of *path*. *Gotama Rāhūgaṇa*, for instance, in one of his mantras observes how it was *Atharvan* who for the first time laid the path of sacrifice which subsequently came to be trodden by the sun as the guardian of the law. Subsequent to it, *Uśanā* drove the cows on it. Out of this guided driving of the cows was produced the immortality which the seer makes imperative on mankind to offer sacrifice to.[15] This mantra simply means that *Atharvan* was the first seer to have discovered the *path* of sacrifice which got confirmed through the discovery of the operation of the same principle of sacrifice in the world of nature including the movement of our sun. *Uśanā*, the *Kāvya*, by driving his cows of intellection, wisdom and intuition, made that *path* more worthwhile so that one could attain to immortality by treading it. This interpretation of the role of the sun in this mantra gets confirmation from the mantra quoted and discussed immediately prior to it in which the seer asks mankind to follow the sun and the moon in treading the path of righteousness. In any case, while sacrifice has been envisaged here as the aptest mode of living, the idea of sacrifice itself has been visualised summarily through the symbol of *path*.

This symbolism is made clearer in another mantra addressed to *Bṛhaspati*. Here the deity is prayed to drive away from the *path* of worship anyone who may be determined to do violence to the innocent worshipper being inimical to him like the rapacious wolf, and make this *path* easily fordable for getting the divine felicity.[16] What has been indicated by *amṛta* in the previous mantra, the same has been suggested by the word *devavīti* in this mantra while the path which is intended to be made easy to tread,

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15 यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्ततेे ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि।
आ गा आजदुशना काव्यः सचा यमस्य जातममृतं यजामहे।। *Ibid., I.83.5.*

16 उत वा यो नो मर्चयादनागसोऽरातीवा मर्तःसानुको वृकः।
बृहस्पते अप तं वर्तया पथः सुगं नो अस्यै देववीतये कृधि।। *Ibid., II.23.7.*

is nothing but sacrifice symbolised by *path*.

Of course, any symbolic usage in the Veda needs to be determined as such on the ground of parallelism somewhere or the other in the *Samhitā* between it and what it is chosen to symbolise, if, as a matter of fact, the symbolism is not clear in itself. Applying this canon in the case of the symbolism of *path*, we find sacrifice and *path* put together side by side almost in equivalence to each other several times in the *Saṁhitā*. For instance, in one such mantra the *Rbhus* are prayed to by the seer to take cognisance of the *path* meant for the sacrifice so that, having prayed to them, the seer may go across in all the directions.[17] Here the *path* meant for sacrifice is obviously the path of sacrifice itself. Taking cognisance of that *path* is, therefore, equivalent to taking cognisance of the sacrifice itself. Similarly in another mantra addressed to the *Ādityas*, the latter have been prayed to lead the performance of the sacrifice along the straight *path* so that it may result in their taking note of it.[18] In another mantra, likewise, the *Viśve Devāh* are prayed to instruct the seer who, being elected as their *hotṛ* priest, would like to know where to take his seat and contemplate on them as also the way by which to offer to each one of them his due share.[19]

It is on the basis of such parallelism between the symbol and the symbolised idea or state of things that one can stand on sure footing to decide cases where only the symbol is stated explicitly. For instance, in one of his mantras, *Manu Vaivasvata* prays to *Pūşan*, wealth and good fortune incarnate, to come to him, since his coming itself widens the *path* of well-being.[20] Similarly in another mantra, the seer *Brahmātithi* prays to the *Aśvins* to fulfil what he calls his desire for cows and grant to him whatever he intends to attain as also open out the way for such an achievement.[21] There is also another mantra in which the seer *Pratikşatra* gets the revelation as if he is yoked to the chariot as a horse and draws

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17 वि नो॑ वाजा ऋभुक्षणः प॒थश्चि॑तन॒ यष्ट॑वे।
अ॒स्मभ्यं॑ सूरयः स्तु॒ता विश्वा॒ आशा॑स्तरी॒षणि॑।। *Ibid., IV.37.7.*

18 यं य॒ज्ञं नय॑था नर॒ आदि॑त्या ऋ॒जुना॑ प॒था।
प्र वः॒ स धी॒तये॑ नशत्।। *Ibid., I.41.5.*

19 विश्वे॑ देवाः शा॒स्तन॑ मा॒ यथे॒ह होता॑ वृ॒तो म॒नवै॒ यन्नि॒षद्य॑।
प्र मे॑ ब्रूत भाग॒धेयं॒ यथा॑ वो॒ येन॑ प॒था ह॒व्यमा वो॒ वहा॑नि।। *Ibid., X.52.1.*

20 ऐतु॑ पूषा र॒यिर्भगः॑ स्व॒स्ति स॑र्व॒धात॑मः।
उ॒रुरध्वा॑ स्व॒स्तये॑।। *Ibid., VIII.31.11.*

21 उ॒त नो॒ गोम॑ती॒रिष॑ उ॒त सा॒तीर॑हर्विदा। वि प॒थः सा॒तये॑ सितम्।। *Ibid., VIII.5.9*

the carriage which is capable of taking one across the whole *path* safely. His assignment is so fascinating that he wants neither to be relieved of it nor to look behind, as the knower of the *path*, understandably the charioteer, intends to drive him by the shortest route.[22] In this symbolism while the seer acts as the horse, and the Divine as the charioteer, the way from bondage to liberation, insecurity to security, or indeed mortality to immortality is the *path* which the seer is treading without any wish to stop or return.

Now the question arises as to what this shortest route is which is so fascinating as not to allow the seer to stop or look behind and goes across all limitations, evils and agonies of the world. Apparently this *path* is the path of sacrifice, as sacrifice as a whole or at least in parts is adduced parallelly to *path* in a number of mantras. *Sāyaṇa*, indeed, must have derived much of his inspiration from such mantras in his monumental effort to interpret the entire Veda in terms of sacrifice.

Consideration over certain other mantras, being rather more numerous, obliges us to go further than sacrifice in our quest for the real meaning of *path* in the Veda. In one of such mantras, the seer observes that he, along with others, is invoking *Agni*, the inevitable means of sacrifice, along the *path* of *Ṛta*, by means of obeisance accompanied by offering of oblations.[23] In this mantra, *path* is associated with sacrifice on the one hand and with *Ṛta* on the other. In fact, the *path* belongs to *Ṛta* and is made use of it in paying obeisance to *Agni*, the necessary instrument of sacrifice. Thus, it is evident that sacrifice and *Ṛta* are not one and the same thing. *Ṛta*, indeed, is the path by treading which sacrifice gets performed. This distinction between sacrifice and *Ṛta* becomes still clearer from another mantra in which *Agni* has been prayed to sweeten the path leading to *Ṛta* as well as to elevate the sacrifice performed by humans on their own plane to the plane of the divine and thus enrich and make the sacrifice really successful.[24] According to this mantra also, therefore, *Ṛta* serves as the *path* by going along which sacrifice gets enriched so as to get elevated from the human to the divine. Thus, sacrifice itself is not *Ṛta* but its fabric gets transformed by passing along the path of *Ṛta*.

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22 हयो॒ न वि॒द्वां अ॑युजि स्व॒यं धु॒रि तां व॑हामि प्र॒तर॑णीमवस्यु॒वम्।
नास्या॑ वश्मि वि॒मुचं॒ नावृ॑तं पु॒नर्वि॒द्वान् प॒थः पु॑रए॒त ऋ॒जु ने॑षति।। *Ibid., V.46.1.*

23 तं य॑ज्ञसाध॒मपि॑ वातयामस्यु॒तस्य॑ प॒था नम॑सा ह॒विष्म॑ता दे॒वता॑ता ह॒विष्म॑ता। *Ibid.,I.128.2.*

24 तनू॑नपात् प॒थ ऋ॒तस्य॒ यान॒न् मध्वा॑ सम॒ञ्जन् त्स्वदया॑ सुजिह्व।
मन्मा॑नि धी॒भिरु॒त य॒ज्ञमृ॒न्धन् देव॑त्रा॒ च॑ कृणुह्यध्व॒रं नः॑।। *Ibid., X.110.2.*

Ṛta is, indeed, one of the most fundamental principles discovered by Vedic seers. It is the principle of dynamics inherent in the eternal stasis of the Ultimate Being. It is owing to the inherence of this principle that Eternal condescends to pass through the passage of time so as to lead to emergence of the sequential. Thus it forms the bridge between the eternal stasis and the universal dynamics. It merges in the Absolute on the one hand and involves itself in the relative on the other so as to make the latter possible. The point of its merger in the Absolute has, for instance, been recounted in one of the mantras of seer *Śrutavit Ātreya* as one where *Ṛta* enshrouds it in the *Ṛta* itself in some such way as at the rock-bottom of the process of involution darkness engulfs itself in darkness, as the famous *Ṛgvedic* hymn of creation recounts.[25] It is like the sun withdrawing all its rays within itself and remaining in its own self until the time of its rising in the morning. It is in this state of complete absorption of *Ṛta* in the Absolute that seer *Śrutavit Ātreya* claims to have had the vision of the latter as one who sees the orb of the sun clearly when all the rays of the latter are withdrawn within it at the time of setting.[26]

It is from this essential status of it in Absolute that not only *Ṛta* makes its emergence so as to bring about the process of the world but also leaves behind it, so to say, the *path* on which the creatures of the process may stage their travail so as to reach the grand destination. Just as a boat sailing in a river down stream moves at a speed not wholly of its own but with the speed of the flowing water added to its own, even so the distance a particular creature of the creation covers in its life, is not entirely the result of its own doing but that of the dynamics of *Ṛta* added to its own. From this viewpoint, *Ṛta* has been conceived as the horse *Dadhikrāvan* which, as its name literally means, moves ahead as soon as one rides it. This obviously is suggestive of its constant mobility.

There is another mantra seen by *Gṛtsamada* in which *Ṛta* has been referred to as the common *path* followed by waters in moving uniformly to the sea. Referring to streams of water flowing to the sea he observes that they are flowing closely and continuously flooded with water as if to feed the ocean which is so pervasive. *Indra* deserves all our praise, the seer points out, since it is he who is responsible for the creation of this

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25 तम॑ आसीत् तम॑सा गू॒ळ्हमग्रे॑ऽप्रके॒तं स॑लि॒लं सर्व॑मा इ॒दम्। *Ibid., X.129.3.*

26 ऋ॒तेन॑ ऋ॒तमपि॑हितं ध्रु॒वं वां॒ सूर्य॑स्य॒ यत्र॒ विमु॒चन्त्यश्वा॑न्।
दश॒ शता॒ सह॒ तस्थु॒स्तदेकं॑ दे॒वानां॒ श्रेष्ठं॒ वपु॑षामपश्यम्॥ *Ibid., V.62.1.*

universally operative law of nature for the first time.[27]

This is the basic character of the *path* of *Ṛta*. *Path* in this context symbolises the way following which one makes maximum use of the dynamics of *Ṛta*, in the same way as the boat makes use of the flow of water by sailing down stream. It is in this sense that seer *Vasistha* in one of his mantras addressed to *Dadhikrāvan* prays to the latter to anoint the *path*, obviously through his movement, so that the seer or indeed the humanity may tread along the path of *Ṛta*.[28] Another seer, namely *Parvata Kāṇva*, quotes the analogy of water flowing automatically to the sea to bring home the idea of the *path* of *Ṛta*. That exhilaration of *Soma* under the ecstasy of which you have made water in such abundance flow towards the sea, O *Indra*, I would like the same to be imparted to us, observes the seer, so that we may choose automatically to tread the *path* of *Ṛta*.[29]

If the analogy of water flowing towards the sea brings out the automatic dynamism of the path of *Ṛta* or indeed of the *Ṛta* as symbolised by *path*, the association of *Uṣas* with it brings home its straightness. This is evident from one of the mantras of *Satyaśrava Ātreya* addressed to *Uṣas*. By way of describing her advent the seer observes that the brilliant *Uṣas* spreads her splendour all over the heaven and the earth projecting herself bodily ahead. Thus, he adds, she follows the path of *Ṛta* straightaway and in this way leaves little chance for any digression from the chosen course.[30] There is another mantra seen by *Praskaṇva Kāṇva* in which again the word *sādhu*, straight, has been used, to bring out equivalence between the path of *Ṛta* and the rays of the sun. The seer observes that since the streak of light from the heaven has come to be seen, the straight path of *Ṛta* capable of leading us across has been made available.[31] As light travels naturally in straight line, it takes to the shortest route to

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27 सध्रीमा यन्ति पथो बिभ्रतीः पयो विश्वप्न्याय प्र भरन्त भोजनम्।
समानो अध्वा प्रवतामनुष्यदे यस्ता अकृणोः प्रथमं सास्युक्थ्यः ।। *Ibid., II.13.2.*

28 आ नो दधिक्राः पथ्यामनक्त्वृतस्य पन्थामन्वेतवा उ। *Ibid., VI.44.5.*

29 येन सिन्धुं महीरपो रथाँ इव प्रचोदयः।
पन्थामृतस्य यातवे तमीमहे।। *Ibid., VIII.12.3.*

30 एषा व्येनि भवति द्विबर्हा आविष्कृण्वाना तन्वं पुरस्तात्।
ऋतस्य पन्थामन्वेति साधु प्रजानतीव न दिशो मिनाति।। *Ibid., V.80.4.*

31 अभूदु पारमेतवे पन्था ऋतस्य साधुया।
अदर्शि वि स्रुतिर्दिवः।। *Ibid., I.46.11.*

reach its destination. By virtue of this property, it forms the best symbol of the path of *Ṛta* in this respect. It suggests best the straightness of this *path*.

Soma is another significant object which has been associated with the path of *Ṛta*. It has been said to move along the path of *Ṛta* making continuously loud sound. It has also at the same time been described as the king of rivers, lord of the heaven and as being sprinkled in thousands of streams as also bringing purity to speech.[32] This *Soma*, obviously, is not the ordinary drink squeezed out of a certain creeper but something inherent in the nature of things, as another Rgvedic seer suggests elsewhere.[33] Almost the same terminology has been used by another seer, namely *Parāśara*, while describing *Soma* as following the path of *Ṛta* and roaring within seers undergoing deep contemplation.[34] It has also been stated to be the abode of immortality. Similarly, there is another mantra seen by *Kāśyapa Asita* in which *Soma* has been said to flow along the path of *Ṛta* to the fundamental nature of things as it is conversant with the entire scheme of things.[35] It is evident from all these details that Soma as visualised by seers quoted at least here refers to the basic nature of things and it is under this supposition that its description as the king of rivers and lord of the heaven as well as abode of immortality can justifiably be accounted for. It seems to represent the principle of delight inherent in the universe and facilitate the working of it from top to bottom as is suggested by its lordship over heaven on the one hand and management of the flow of rivers on the other. Flow of such *Soma* along the path of *Ṛta*, therefore, naturally reflects the seriousness of the path. It is significant to note that everything in the universe, if looked into the essentials of its behaviour, follows the path of convenience which in itself is prompted by the principle of ease at the lower level getting graduated subsequently at higher levels into the desire for pleasure, joy and delight. As per the requirement of the structure of the Vedic thought as a whole, if

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32 राजा सिन्धूनां पवते पतिर्दिव ऋतस्य याति पथिभिः कनिक्रदत्।
सहस्रधारः परि षिच्यते हरिः पुनानो वाचं जनयन्नुपावसुः।। *Ibid., IX.86.33*

33 सोमं मन्यते पपिवान् यत् संपिंषन्त्योषधिम्।
सोमं यं ब्रह्माणो विदुर्न तस्याश्नाति कश्चन।। *Ibid., X.85.3.*

34 कनिक्रदद्वनु पन्थामृतस्य शुक्रो वि भास्यमृतस्य धाम।
स इन्द्राय पवसे मत्सरवान् हिन्वानो वाचं मतिभिः कवीनाम्।। *Ibid., IX.97.32*

35 असृग्रमिन्दवः पथा धर्मन् ऋतस्य सुश्रियः।
विदाना अस्य योजनम्।। *Ibid., IX.7.1.*

we were to examine the above process of graduation by putting it upside down, we can easily find out how it is the principle of delight getting gradually diluted into joy, pleasure and ease which is determining the entire working of the universe. When the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* characterises the Ultimate Reality as a squash, *rasa*, and observes that nobody would have liked to inhale and exhale even if delight were not there in the form of the expanse of space,[36] it only restates in its own way axiomatically what has been suggested by Vedic seers symbolically. It is in this perspective alone that *Soma* can be described as the abode of immortality at least. Here the *rasa* of the *Upaniṣad* gets automatically coincided with the Vedic *Soma*. To revert to the symbol of *path*, therefore, it is by going in accordance with the principle of *Ṛta* that we can enjoy the felicity of what *Soma* is made to symbolise. This, in its turn, could not have been made possible, had *Soma* not passed along the path of *Ṛta*, to use the Vedic way of expression. Indeed it is this view of *Soma* which explains properly the functions of stimulation of words from the depth of the psyche of the seer and purification of them through the seer's meditation. The continuous crying of Soma, from this viewpoint, refers to the force and constancy with which the principle represented by *Soma* is operative in the working of the universe.

How *Soma* is intimately connected with the path of *Ṛta* on the one hand and with purified words of seers on the other is evident from another mantra seen by *Pavitra Angirasa*. According to him, the rays of *Soma* have descended from the most primeval entity conceivable. Their descent is regulated by the wisdom seers have imbibed in the form of mantras not so much on account of their efforts as on account of the wisdom itself willing to descend forcefully. Those who do not have eyes to see the rays of *Soma* and ears to listen to the words of the seer, cannot but deprive themselves of the wisdom underlying those visions and words. Being deprived of that essential wisdom, one cannot but go wrong in his deeds. Wrong-doers, the seer asserts, can by no means go across the path of *Ṛta*.[37] Obviously, this mantra also anticipates the Upaniṣadic viewpoint referred to above according to which the pure knowledge coming down to us in the form of delight is the real *rasa,* no matter be it tasted through poetry, *yoga* or the

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36 यद्वै तत्सुकृतं रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति। को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्यात् यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात्। *Taittirīya Up.II.7.*

37 प्रलान्मानादध्या ये समस्वरञ्छ्लोकयन्त्रासो रभसस्य मन्तवः।
अपानक्षासो बधिरा अहासत ऋतस्य पन्थां न तरन्ति दुष्कृतः।। *Ibid., IX.73.6.*

actuality of life itself. It is symbolised by *Soma* in the Veda. The rays of *Soma* are streaks of delight descending on us through our deeper understanding. If, however, we are unable to taste that *Soma*, that is due to our spiritual blindness and deafness which is not only prone to make us indulge in wrong-doings but in itself is a great lacuna in us. This lacuna in its turn disqualifies us for treading the path of *Ṛta*. Those, on the other hand, who are in a position to make up for this deficiency through the development of the power of vision and hearing of things spiritual, automatically qualify themselves for treading the path of *Ṛta* which in any case runs always straight.

There is another seer, namely *Kavaşa Ailūşa*, to talk about the path of *Ṛta*. He is eager to see mankind treading the path of *Ṛta*. This, in his view, however, has certain prerequisites. One of them is developing towards wealth the outlook that it is not anything permanent but fleeting. It has, therefore, to be used liberally to the cause of the Divine. The third thing in this row as suggested by the seer is maintenance of communication with one's fundamental source of will power. Lastly, one has to catch hold of the higher creative power lying within oneself and make use of it in treading the path of *Ṛta*.[38] The *path* which would be trodden with the refined bent of mind would obviously be the path of *Ṛta* as qualified by straightforwardness, purity of intention and sense of detachment. It has, therefore, further been characterised as lying in transcendence of all evil doings. This is evident from *Sudās Paijavana's* prayer to *Indra* to take mankind in the circle of his friendship so as to make it tread the path of *Ṛta* lying in transcendence of all misdeeds.[39] In one of his mantras *Viśvāmitra* talks of meditative ideas emerging from action and treading the path of *Ṛta*.[40] This goes to show that the path of *Ṛta* cannot be understood properly by sheer involvement in action. Meditative ideation and devotion to the Divine are essential prerequisites of it. This is the central idea underlying the famous mantra seen by *Bṛhaspati* also in which it has been said that one who abandons the faithful friend in the form of the essential meaning of mantras has no right to even chant them since whatever he listens to is all in vain, for it does not lead him along

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38 परिचिन्मर्तो द्रविणं ममन्यादृतस्य पथा नमसा विवासेत्।
उत स्वेन क्रतुना संवदेत श्रेयांसं दक्षं मनसा जगृभ्यात्।। *Ibid. X.31.2.*

39 वयमिन्द त्वायवः सखित्वमा रभामहे।
ऋतस्य नः पथा नयाऽति विश्वानि दुरिता।। *Ibid.,X.133.6.*

40 इन्दोग्नी अपसस्पर्युप प्र यन्ति धीतयः।
ऋतस्य पथ्या३अनु।। *Ibid., III.12.7.*

the *path* of noble action.[41] Elsewhere this *path* has been characterised as taintless and as leading to well being. *Ṛjiśvā Bharadvāja*, for instance, addressing all the gods together collectively, prays to them to lead mankind along the *path* which is taintless, stands beyond the reach of the sense of enmity and is sure to lead one to well being and attainment of the desired objective.[42] *Vasistha*, on the other hand, characterises it as primeval or made available to man since the very beginning, *sanavittaḥ*, as well as easy to traverse.[43] Seer *Kūrma* of the family of *Gṛtsamada* describes it as smooth, thornless and straight.[44] *Vāmadeva* qualifies the same *path* by immortality.[45] *Trita Āptya*, on the other hand, describes it as the path of gods.[46] *Bhikşu*, a progeny of *Aṅgiras*, while asking the rich man to help the deserving seer with wealth, characterises the *path* thus to be made available to the former as extending to infinity. The plea under which he makes this request is the fleeting nature of wealth lying in changing hands from time to time like wheels of the chariot going up and down.[47]

That the path of *Ṛta* can also be in plural, is evident from certain mantras as seen by *Devas, Gauravīti Śāktya* and *Vṛşāngiras*, etc. In one of such mantras, one has been asked to follow the illumination coming from higher states of being while even keeping oneself busy in affairs of the world and seek to keep intact the luminous paths created by seers established in deep meditation. One is further advised in this mantra to manage affairs of life in a smooth way, as per instructions of seers, to become the true man and give birth to the divine man.[48] In another

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41 यस्तित्याज सचिविदं सखायं न तस्य वाच्यपि भागो अस्ति।
यदीं शृणोत्यलकं शृणोति नु हि प्रवेदं सुकृतस्य पन्थाम्।। *Ibid., X.71.6.*

42 अपि पन्थामगन्महि स्वस्तिगामनेहसम्।
येन विश्वाः परि द्विषो वृणक्ति विन्दते वसु।। *Ibid., VI.51.16.*

43 सुगस्ते अग्ने सनवित्तो अध्वा। *Ibid., VII.42.2.*

44 सुगो हि वो अर्यमन् मित्र पन्था अनृक्षरो वरुण साधुरस्ति। *Ibid., II.27.6.*

45 अथैत वाजा अमृतस्य पन्थां गृणं देवानामृभवः सुहस्ताः।। *Ibid., IV.35.3.*

46 आ देवानामपि पन्थामगन्म। *Ibid., X.2.3.*

47 पृणीयादिन्नाधमानाय तव्यान् द्राघीयांसमनु पश्येत् पन्थाम्।
ओ हि वर्तन्ते रथ्येव चक्राऽन्यमन्यमुप तिष्ठन्त रायः।। *Ibid., X.117.5*

48 तन्तुं तन्वन् रजसो भानुमन्विहि ज्योतिष्मतः पथो रक्ष धिया कृतान्।
अनुल्बणं वयत जोगुवामपो मनुर्भव जनया दैव्यं जनम्।। *Ibid., X.53.6.*

mantra seen by *Gauravīti Śāktya*, *Indra* has been praised on account of having created comfortable paths leading eventually to the Divine.[49] These two mantras, though seen by different seers, are, thus, unanimous in characterising the path of *Ṛta* as diverse in its origin and yet unanimous in the elevation of man to the status of the Divine. These paths, in the third mantra, have been described as *retas* of the heaven, forceful and irreversible.[50]

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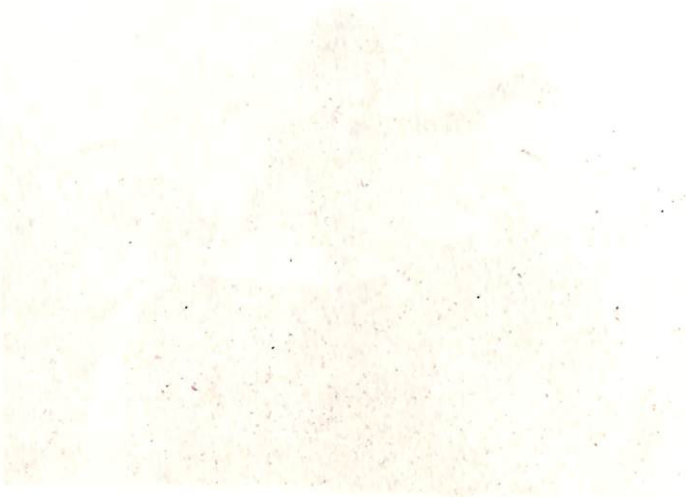
49 त्वं चकर्थ मनवे स्योनान् पथो देवत्राञ्जसेव यानान्। । *Ibid., X.73.7.*

50 दिवो न यस्य रेतसो दुघानाः पन्थासो यन्ति शवसापरीताः । *Ibid., I.100.3.*

Panis



Determination of the nature of *Paṇis* is one of the more difficult problems of Vedic interpretation. Their names occur about fifty times in the *Ṛgveda* itself. Generally they have been taken as representative of the non-Aryans hostile to Aryans, stealing particularly the latter's cows and keeping them confined to a certain cave in mountains. One view identifies them with the people of *Phoenicia* who were highly skilled in business and hence were very much detested by people in general. As these views on *Panis* are based mainly on conjecture and scarcely on what the Vedic text itself has to tell about them, it is highly imperative to inquire about them strictly on textual ground and see if any light may be shed on them through such an approach.

There is no doubt about it that *Paṇis* in the *Ṛgveda* appear as a class of people miserly, unsacrificing, non-believing and given entirely to self-aggrandisement. For instance, in one of his mantras, *Vāmadeva* observes that *Indra* does not approve of his friendship with *Paṇis* who, though rich, do neither press Soma nor offer it to him who in himself is given wholly to *tapas*. The seer further adds that the deity makes possession of *Paṇis* rather painful to them, killing them dispossessed of their wealth while rendering help to one who makes the pressing and offers the libation.[1] In another mantra, the seer *Pragāthā Kāṇva* prays to the same *Indra* to kick away the miserly Paṇis by means of his greatness and incontrovertible position.[2] In another mantra addressed to the *Aśvins* the latter have been rather reproached by seer *Agastya* as to why it is that whosoever is unsacrificing is getting richer in greatness and yet they are not doing anything in this regard. He, therefore, suggests to them that they should attack *Paṇis*, weaken their life and bring light to the inspired seer who offers mantras to them.[3] In another mantra, *Rebha* prays to *Indra* to bestow upon one who is given to pressing *Soma* and offering *dakṣiṇā* the imperishable gift of cows and horses and refrain from giving the same to the *Paṇi*.[4] *Bharadvāja*, on the other hand, prays to *Pūṣan* to pierce the

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1 न रेवता पणिना सख्यमिन्द्रो ऽ सुन्वता सुतपाः संगृणीते।
आस्य वेदः खिदति हन्ति नग्नं विसुष्वये पक्तये केवलो भूत् ।। *RV.IV.25.7.*

2 पदा पणीँरराधसो नि बाधस्व महाँ असि।
न हि त्वा कश्चन प्रति।। *Ibid., VIII.64.2.*

3 किमत्र दसा कृणुथः किमासाथे जनो यः कश्चिदहविर्महीयते।
अतिक्रमिष्टं जुरतं पणेरसुं ज्योतिर्विप्राय कृणुतं वचस्यवे।। *Ibid.I.182.3.*

4 यमिन्द्र दधिषे त्वमश्वं गां भागमव्ययम्।
यजमाने सुन्वति दक्षिणावति तस्मिन् तं धेहि मा पणौ।। *Ibid., VIII.97.2.*

heart of *Paṇis* and bestow upon the seer himself whatever he has to offer.[5] That *Paṇis* were archetypal of miserliness is evident further from a mantra seen by Hiraṇyastūpa in which the seer on behalf of the people of his inclination of mind prays to *Indra* to offer generally to them whatever he intends to give and not behave like the *Paṇi*.[6] Ultimately, *Viśvāmitra* in one of his mantras prays to the *Aśvins* that they should redeem him and his type of the thinking of *Paṇis*.[7]

All these details are sufficient to show that, irrespective of the position in the pre-Vedic era, *Paṇis*, as admitted by the *Ṛgveda*, do not represent any miserly people who are given only to self-aggrandisement. He is practically the same as the man bereft of conscience who according to *Bhikṣu Angirasa* procures wealth in vain and thus invites his demise in the form of it as he helps neither the noble nor even his friend feeding himself alone resulting in bare accumulation of his sins.[8]

This viewpoint about *Paṇis* gathers further confirmation from other references to them also. There is an extremely significant mantra seen by *Vasistha* which by way of stating how *Agni*, the primeval god, has made a certain brand of people regress, enumerates among them *Paṇis* also. The whole list comprises people of evil inclinations, captivators, users of condemnable words, the faithless, obstructors, the non-sacrificing, the destructive and *Paṇis*.[9] As a whole, it characterises all these people as non-sacrificing and destructive. It is needless to point out that to make people self-sacrificing under the realisation that God pervades the world which comprises only fleeting events, is the crux of the entire Vedic philosophy, as has summarily and succinctly been stated in the famous mantra of the *Yajurveda*.[10] Those who do not fall in line with this philosophy are suicidal and are therefore doomed to be dashed to that land after their demise where there is no trace of light of the sun and as

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5 परितृन्धि पणीनामारया हृदया कवे।
अथेमस्मभ्यं रन्धय।। *Ibid., VI.53.5.*

6 चोष्कूयमाण इन्द्र भूरि वामं मा पणिर्भूरस्मदधि प्रवृद्ध। *Ibid., I.33.3.*

7 जरेथामस्मद्विपणेर्मनीषां युवोरवश्चकृमायातमर्वाक्। *Ibid., III.58.2.*

8 मोघमन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेताः सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत् स तस्य।
नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केवलाघो भवति केवलादी।। *Ibid., X.117.6.*

9 न्यक्रतून् ग्रथिनो मृध्रवाचः पणीरश्रद्धां अवृधाँ अयज्ञान्।
प्र प्र तान् दस्यूँरग्निर्विवाय पूर्वश्चकारापरां अयज्यून्।। *Ibid., VII.6.3.*

10 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्।। *Yajurveda. XL.1.*

such where darkness is engulfed in darkness, observes that *Saṁhitā* in the same continuation.[11] Being faithless, self-possessive and non-sacrificing, *Paṇis* represent this type of people and are therefore so much condemned in the Veda. They indeed go against the basic teaching of the Veda not by virtue of belonging to any non-Vedic group of people but on account of their basic nature and behaviour.

This view is further corroborated by certain other mantras associating *Paṇis* with darkness. In one such mantra seen by *Vāmadeva* it has been desired that liberal Dawns may stimulate the conscience of the self-sacrificing people and let *Paṇis* sit in the midst of dense darkness bereft completely of any trace of light.[12] In yet another mantra seen by *Kaksīvat*, the same *Uṣas* has been prayed again to arouse the conscience of feeders of the society by means of her illumination and let *Paṇis* sleep in their miserliness.[13] Obviously it is not that the wealth of *Paṇis* is not needed by the society or that it is somehow detestable to it. As is evident from the mantra, *Uṣas* is the agency of awakening in every respect including both the physical and spiritual. She, therefore, is prayed to bring awakening to all people universally. But, in the eye of seers, there are certain people in the society who are not prone to awakening at all due to completely selfish orientation of their mind. Not to talk of human teachings, even the illumination of *Uṣas* herself cannot awaken them. It is such temperamentally self-centred people who are called *Paṇis* in the Veda.

This viewpoint gets further support from another mantra seen by the sister of *Agastya*. As the tradition goes, she asks King *Asamāti* to yoke his reddish horses to the chariot in favour of her sons and attack on all *Paṇis* who are utterly non-giving.[14] Obviously the human King could attack on *Paṇis* only if they were human beings. They could also not be attacked by a simple chariot-riding, had they been living separately as an entirely separate clan understandably at a considerable distance. They, indeed, as the mantra suggests, were living amidst the common people themselves

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11 असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः।
ताँस्ते प्रेत्यापि गच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः।। *Ibid., XL.3.*

12 उच्छन्तीरद्य चितयन्त भोजान् राधोदेयायोषसो मघोनीः।
अचित्रे अन्तः पणयो ससन्त्वबुध्यमानास्तमसो वि मध्ये।। *RV.IV.51.3.*

13 प्रावोधयोषः पृणतो मघोन्यबुध्यमानाः पणयः ससन्तु। *Ibid., I.124.10.*

14 अगस्त्यस्य नदभ्यः सप्ती युनक्षि रोहिता।
पणीन् न्यक्रमीरभि विश्वान् राजन्नराधसः।। *Ibid., X.60.6.*

but were distinguished by their extreme self-centredness. That is why they were desired to be eliminated through the King as the conscience of the seer considered their flourishing in the society pernicious for its sustenance and health.

But if *Paṇis* lived amidst the common man, what is the explanation for their keeping cows in caves which understandably were lying far away from the residence of the common man? In a mantra seen by *Viśvamanāḥ Vaiyāśva*, of course, *Paṇis* were described explicitly as nearer to the seer.[15] Such a clear description of *Paṇis* as enemies relatively nearer to the seer shows that they are not to be treated as forming a clan of people living away from the common populace but as something detrimental to the cause of the seers which obviously was seeing into the fundamental nature of things and realising the truth in its finality. That the seers were pursuers of pure truth from within the admixture of falsehood and that it was with this particular motive that they undertook the risk of entering into the cave of *Paṇis* also is evident from one of the mantras seen by *Gṛtsamada*. He very clearly states that the seers moved around in search of something most precious kept concealed in the cave of *Paṇis*, entered into the cave and having got the precious thing from within the falsehood they came back to their settlement.[16]

It is interesting to note that in this mantra there is clear mention of the cave and the *Paṇis* but no mention of the cows at all. Instead of the mention of cows, as is usual with the cave of *Paṇis*, what is brought in here is the *paramaṁ nidhim*, the highest or the most precious wealth. In the second hemistich of the mantra, while describing the achievement of the seers who had ventured to enter into the cave of *Paṇis*, *Gṛtsamada* observes that they came back loaded with knowledge in the form of truth discerned out of falsehoods. The word *praticakṣya* used in this context is significant. There are obviously two things to be discerned from each other. These are truth and falsehood, *Ṛta* and *anṛta*. If *anṛta* is discerned through *praticakṣaṇa*, then it must be *Ṛta* which should be the object of *cakṣaṇa*, the real task undertaken by seers, *praticakṣaṇa* being an incidental product of it. Thus, on *Gṛtsamada's* testimony, we can very well identify the cows kept concealed in the cave of *Paṇis* in the form of truth

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15 अश्विना स्वृषे स्तुहि कुवित्ते श्रवतो हवम्।
नेदीयसः कूळयातः पणीꣳरुत।।*Ibid., VIII.26.10.*

16 अभि नक्षन्तो अभि ये तमानशुर्निधिं पणीनां परमं गुहा हितम्।
ते विद्वांसः प्रतिचक्ष्यानृता पुनर्यते उ आयन् तदुदीयुराविशम्।।*Ibid., II.24.6.*

discovered by seers with most arduous effort and the highest possible spirit of adventure. The magnitude of the ordeal and adventure involved in this noble task is suggested by the account of their entering into the cave and yet managing to come back home.

That *Paṇis* were not any ordinary sort of beings, is evident from another mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* in which while praying to *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* he observes that even the heavens, the days, the oceans and *Paṇis* were not capable of reaching the divinity and richness of them.[17] While the heaven and the oceans symbolise space, days stand for time. Thus the mantra purports to say that the divinity of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* transcends space-time. Placing of *Paṇis* in this cosmic frame of reference, therefore, points to their having to do something on this largest possible extent. As such, the cave in which they might have kept concealed the cows, will have to be understood accordingly.

There is another mantra seen by *Bharadvāja* in which something significant has been made out about *Paṇis* with reference to *Bṛbu* and the river *Ganga*. It has been stated in this mantra that *Bṛbu* set himself at the most abundantly water-shedding head of *Paṇis* kindred to the vast bed of the river Ganga.[18] As the word *Bṛbu* does not occur anywhere else except in the third mantra hence in this very hymn, we are not in a position to say anything more about it than that it is the name of a certain agency which was abundantly rich in its potentiality and made offerings also in inestimable quantity. It is said to lie at the head of *Paṇis* which is characterised as most abundant in richness while *Bṛbu* is compared to the vast bed of the river *Gaṅgā*. The bed of *Gaṅgā* has come to stand for the perennial source of purest water serving all those who have been coming into contact with it since time immemorial. Incidentally reference to the river *Gaṅgā* and that also with regard to the extraordinary width of its bed in this sixth *maṇḍala* of the *Saṁhitā* which is one of the family books of it and is therefore considered to belong to its earliest part incontrovertibly, stands as a sure evidence against the view generally held today that the Vedic Aryans were not familiar with this river almost throughout the whole of the *Ṛgvedic* period except coming down to the period of the tenth *maṇḍala* as they had not advanced to the *Gangetic* valley until much later.

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17 न वां द्यावोऽहभिर्नोत सिन्धवो न देवत्वं पणयो नानशुर्मघम्। । *Ibid., I.151.9.*

18 अधि बृबुः पणीनां वर्षिष्ठे मूर्धन्नस्थात्।
उरुः कक्षो न गाङ्ग्यः। । *Ibid., VI.45.31.*

To revert to our basic task, however, equation of *Bṛbu* with this perennial, mighty and sacred bed of *Gaṅgā* bears out obviously the significance of the former as the source of nourishment more in spirituality and sanctity than in intellectuality and physicality. *Bṛbu's* lying at the head of *Paṇis* suggests the availability of that wealth to them also who having got it, however, want to keep it confined to themselves alone only for the pleasure of its possession leaving little scope for its use by the needy. In this respect, they work as a dam intended to stop the water of a certain river. Now, if the river contemplated to be stopped completely in its flow be one no less mighty than the *Gaṅgā* itself, how calamitous it would be for a vast area like the Gangetic valley! If, suppose, this stream be somehow a feeder on universal scale, the calamity would be of infinitely vaster dimension.

This is what happens in the case of *Paṇis*. On account of *Bṛbu* sitting on their head, they naturally receive from him the stream of the precious fluid but most dishonestly try to keep it confined to themselves at the expense of all those who deserve to be benefited by its use. If *Sāyaṇa's* view of *Bṛbu* as the architect of *Paṇis* be based on any really extant tradition, he would have to be understood as a certain divine agency working behind the operation of evil forces in this world. It is perhaps owing to his divinity that he happens to be compared with the wide bank of the *Gaṅgā* and as such to have come to be admired by seer *Bharadvāja* as the wise giver as well as receiver in thousands.[19] All these details bear out that *Bṛbu* is divine rather than devilish but somehow in the scheme of creation he has come to play the role of the feeder of *Paṇis*.

That *Paṇis* essentially represent something in the world of spirituality rather than anything in the gross physicality is also evident from the agencies and means employed in rescuing the so-called cows from their cave. Apart from the mantra quoted at *footnote 15* above showing how it is the wise seers themselves who entered into the cave and came out with the most precious thing in the form of truth, there are several other mantras showing how it was through the services of the seers that *Indra* came to vanquish the *Paṇis*. In one such mantra seen by *Sunahotra Bhāradvāja*, *Indra* is praised to have pierced through *Paṇis* with the help of the seers.[20] There is yet another mantra seen by *Bārhaspatya Bhāradvāja* in which *Indra* is said to have fought against *Paṇis* by means

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वृबुं सहस्रदातमं सूरिं सहस्रसातमम्।। *Ibid., VI.45.33.*

20 त्वे विप्रेभिर्वि पणीरशायन्। *Ibid., VI.33.2.*

of words which obviously are the words expressive of the spiritual wisdom.[21]

Another significant word used for whatever lies concealed in the cave of *Paṇis* is *arka* which usually is taken in the sense of light or the sun. As this word is derived from *arc*, to worship, the light and the sun have come to be called *arka* owing to having been considered as worth worshipping since long. We may take it fairly well, therefore, to have meant originally the adorable light. This word occurs twice in the *Saṁhitā* in connection with *Paṇis*. In one of these mantras, *Agni* has been considered as the doer of noble deeds on account of having purified the gate of the cave of *Paṇis* and made available to the seer and persons of that sort the sacred light ,which proved to be their abundant food.[22] Getting sacred light which is nourishing and fulfilling by removing the lid of the cave and that also through *Agni* proves a strange jumble of ideas if tried to be understood in any way other than that this sacred light is the light of the illuminating wisdom the seers discovered from a certain source within themselves which it is extremely arduous to penetrate and arrive at. The entire situation is obviously cognate to what in the *Īśa Upaniṣad* is described as the golden lid having concealed inside it the truth which *Pūṣan* is prayed to remove so that one can see the real nature of things in the form of truth.[23] As the seer is panting for this light of wisdom, its acquisition by him is nothing less than the acquisition of food by the hungry. Thus, the seer's sense of fulfilment on the acquisition of this light happens to be denoted here through the symbol of food and eating.

Another mantra making use of the word *arka* in connection with the cave of *Paṇis* has been seen by *Bharadvāja*. According to his account, *Paṇis* ran away in hundreds in the event of the seer *Daśoṇi* getting the sacred light.[24] It is significant to note that here in this mantra also the immediate beneficiary of the sacred light is none less than a seer who is described here as *Daśoṇi*. *Daśoṇi* may be taken as an adjective of the word *kavaye* used in the sense of one who had control over his five sense organs and five organs of action. In this circumstance, the winning of the singular

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23 हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये।। *Īśa Upaniṣad, 15.*

24 शतैरपद्रन् पणय इन्द्रादा दशोणये कुवयेऽर्कसातौ। *RV. VI.20.4.*

To revert to our basic task, however, equation of *Bṛbu* with this perennial, mighty and sacred bed of *Gaṅgā* bears out obviously the significance of the former as the source of nourishment more in spirituality and sanctity than in intellectuality and physicality. *Bṛbu's* lying at the head of *Paṇis* suggests the availability of that wealth to them also who having got it, however, want to keep it confined to themselves alone only for the pleasure of its possession leaving little scope for its use by the needy. In this respect, they work as a dam intended to stop the water of a certain river. Now, if the river contemplated to be stopped completely in its flow be one no less mighty than the *Gaṅgā* itself, how calamitous it would be for a vast area like the Gangetic valley! If, suppose, this stream be somehow a feeder on universal scale, the calamity would be of infinitely vaster dimension.

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22 स सुकतुर्यो वि दुरः पणीनां पुनानो अर्क पुरुभोजसं नः। *Ibid., VII.9.2.*
23 हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये।। *Īśa Upaniṣad, 15.*
24 शतैरपद्रन् पणयं इन्द्रादा दशोणये कुवयेऽर्कसातौ। *RV.VI.20.4.*

light by the seer would all the more convincingly refer to a certain great spiritual attainment.

There are two contiguous mantras seen by *Rāhūgaṇa Gautama* which supply us with some further information in this regard. In the first one of these mantras it has been observed that amongst seers the *Āṅgirasas* were first to have obtained from *Paṇis* their entire nourishing wealth in the form of horses and cows or indeed animals in general. The means they are said to have used for this momentous achievement is kindling the fire and making offerings in it in the form of noble action.[25] In the accomplishment of this significant task another seer who seems to have played as vital a role as the *Āṅgirasas* is *Atharvan*. He is said in the very next mantra to have prepared the path along which *Sūrya* as the final beatitude descended on the seer. The third seer involved in this task, according to the same mantra, is *Bhṛgu* who drove out the cows from the cave. Thus it was due to self-control exercised by these three sets of seers, that is, the *Āṅgirasas, Atharvan* and *Bhṛgu* that the consciousness of immortality or the immortality itself was brought down to man and is being sought to be inculcated since.[26]

It is evident from these details that the actual task of driving out the cows from the cave of *Paṇis* is accomplished by seers themselves. This is done by them not just in one go but by a number of them working for it for quite a long stretch of time. The families involved in this task in particular are those of *Aṅgiras, Atharvan* and *Bhṛgu*. *Atharvan* seems to have prepared the path and *Bhṛgu* to have mobilised the cows, while *Aṅgiras* appears to have consolidated the whole undertaking by capturing the hidden wealth which is as much as to supply food to humanity for all time to come. In this momentous undertaking, the means the seers are stated to have applied were self-control, self-sacrifice, noble action, ignition of the fire of consciousness and invocation of the higher consciousness in the form of *Indra* in particular.

The role of gods in this venture is rather subsidiary. They help seers in achieving their objective in one form or the other. *Soma* is one of such

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25 आदंगिराः प्रथमं दधिरे वय इद्भाग्नयः शम्या ये सुकृत्यया।
सर्वे पुणेः सर्मविन्दन्त भोजनमश्वावन्तं गोमन्तमापशुं नरः। । *Ibid., I.83.4.*

26 युज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्ततेः ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि।
आ गा आजदुशना काव्यः सचा यमस्य जातममृतं यजामहे। । *Ibid., I.83.5.*

gods. He helps in this task rather indirectly as a stimulant of *Indra*. As soon as *Soma* is squeezed out of the creeper, it is taken up by *Indra* who then vanquishes *Paṇis* and rescues the cows, observes the seer *Śaṁyu*.[27] Similarly in another mantra seen by *Agastya*, the *Aśvins* are prayed to kill *Paṇis* under the exhilaration of *Soma*.[28] There is another mantra seen by *Asīta*, however, in which *Soma* is said to have dispossessed *Paṇis* of the wealth of cows directly by himself.[29] It is evident from these references that rescuing of cows from the cave of *Paṇis* is closely associated with drinking of *Soma* by gods and exhilaration caused to them by this drinking. Now if gods help in driving out cows under exhilaration of *Soma*, seers may be supposed to have felt the same exhilaration themselves by accomplishing the actual act of driving them out. This probably was the immediate incentive before them in undertaking this adventurous task. The exhilaration derived out of this task by seers may be construed as a figurative account of the state of self-satisfaction.

That the object driven out of the cave was not exactly cow but something else associated with the self-satisfaction of seers and that the actual personae involved in this task and the ultimate beneficiaries of it were not gods but seers is evident from another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva* and that also in the context of one of the most mysterious and symbolic hymns in the *Ṛgveda*. According to it, what was kept concealed in the cave was not so much cow as *ghṛta* kept concealed within the cow herself. Further the *ghṛta* itself is said to have been produced by *Indra* in one aspect, by *Sūrya* in another and by *Vena* in the third one. While in the case of *Indra* and *Sūrya ghṛta* in those respective aspects was produced by the deities concerned, in the last aspect it was carved out of *Agni* called *Vena* by the self-power of the seers themselves.[30] *Sāyaṇa* takes by these three forms of *ghṛta* the latter's prior subsistence in milk, curd and butter respectively. This interpretation simply implies that the cows restored from the cave were just ordinary cows whose milk was taken out, was turned into curd, and then butter was churned out of the curd and lastly it was melted in the heat of fire and was clarified so as to yield *ghṛta*. This simple meaning, however, loses its relevance in regard to the subsequent mantras of the hymn dealing with the same *ghṛta*.

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27 अयं देवः सहसा जायमान इन्द्रेण युजा पणिमस्तभायत। *Ibid., VI.44.22.*

28 अस्मे ऊ षु वृषणा मादयेथामुत पणीर्हितमूर्या मदन्ता। *Ibid., I.184.2.*

29 त्वं सोम पणिभ्य आ वसु गव्यानि धारयः। ततं तन्तुमचिक्रदः॥ *Ibid., IX.22.7.*

30 त्रिधा हितं पणिभिर्गुह्यमानं गवि देवासो घृतमन्वविन्दन्।
इन्द्र एकं सूर्य एकं जजान वेनादेकं स्वधया निष्टतक्षुः॥ *Ibid., IV.58.4.*

In the mantra following immediately the above one, streams of *ghṛta* are stated to rush forth not from any vessel or the laddle, as the case ought to have been as per *Sāyaṇa's* interpretation, but from the ocean of the heart in hundreds of channels and so swiftly as to escape the eye of the enemy who obviously is the *Paṇi*. The seer, however, claims that he sees directly not only the streams themselves but also a golden reed in the midst of them.[31] That it is due to the velocity of the flow that the enemy is not able to see the streams, is evident from the next mantra in which the speedy streams are compared to the deer escaping away fast on seeing the hunter. To the eye-sight, however, their view is as distinct as that of a flooded river. The vision, according to the seer, has acquired this distinctness owing to the streams being visualised not by the ordinary mind but by the special one operating from within the heart.[32]

The real status of this stream of *ghṛta* as visualised by the inner mind is recounted in the last mantra of the hymn. Here, paradoxically enough, the universe is said to rest on the supportive power of the *ghṛta*. It is said to dwell inside the ocean on the one hand and inside living beings on the other; in the reservoir of water on the one side and in the gathering of men on the other.[33]

It is evident from this account that the *ghṛta* is both intra-psychic and cosmic. It is cosmic by virtue of its operation as sustainer of the universe. It is intra-psychic on account of the seer getting its real glimpse within himself in the ocean of his heart by means of his inner mind. Its being found inside the ocean and in the gathering of human beings is just elaboration on or exemplification of its subsistence on both these polar ends of the reality, that is, universal and individual.

That this vision relates basically to the inmost source of the human consciousness, understanding and knowledge is evident also from a mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*. After recounting the realisation of his oneness with the omniscient and universal creator *Agni*, as also after stating in

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31 एता अर्षन्ति हृद्यात्समुद्राच्छतव्रजा रिपुणा नावचक्षे।
घृतस्य धारा अभिचाकशीमि हिरण्ययो वेतसो मध्य आसाम्।। *Ibid., IV,58.5.*

32 सम्यक् स्रवन्ति सरितो न धेना अन्तर्हृदा मनसा पूयमानाः।
एते अर्षन्त्यूर्मयो घृतस्य मृगा इव क्षिपणोरीषमाणाः।। *Ibid., IV.58.6.*

33 धामन् ते विश्वं भुवनमधिश्रितमन्तः समुद्रे हृद्यन्तरायुषि।
अपामनीके समिथे य आभृतस्तमश्याम मधुमन्तं त ऊर्मिम्।। *Ibid., IV.58.11.*

the same continuation how he has come to this realisation through perusal of the intra-psychic illumination, he pays his homage to the Teacher lying within himself as a reservoir flowing out in hundreds of streams and yet remaining all the same eternally serving as the source of all the words of understanding.[34]

Boundlessness of the potentiality of human consciousness is the greatest wonder of the world. In its source it is obviously subatomic but in the range of its operation it has proved itself universal or rather trans-universal. Reaching out of the subatomic to cosmic and extra-cosmic bounds, however, is not an easy task. Sprouting of the potential to its full extent has been restricted by so many barriers and constraints that it is only rarely and that also after tremendous effort and pitfalls that it comes to assume the form of the fully developed tree. Just like a tiny grain inside the *banyan* fruit being potentially the gigantic tree itself, every human individual is potentially omniscient. But human beings mostly are extremely limited in their range of understanding. Such restriction cannot be attributed to the nature of things itself. If that were the case, nobody so far would have been able to go beyond what is of utmost necessity to him for his continuance in life. There are glaring cases of Vedic seers, Upaniṣadic sages, *Buddha* and very many men of wisdom born world over, who evidently have attained infinitely much more wisdom than what an individual ordinarily needs for the sustenance of his life. Each one of these men of wisdom, however, has come across tremendous difficulties in course of his realisation of truth.

Being the most primeval ones of these wise people surviving in the history of mankind, Vedic seers must have faced such ordeals more painstakingly than those who followed them. It is these ordeals which have been personified in the Veda in the form of *Paṇis*, etc. reportedly stealing cows of *Indra* and keeping them confined to their caves and yielding them under the pressure of *Indra* and other gods but significantly enough only to the seers. The seers, on their end, receive these cows not in the form of cows themselves but in the form of mantras embodying truths discerned out of falsehood. It is, indeed, the Vedic mantras, embodying eternal truths, which are the cows kept concealed by *Paṇis* and rescued by seers with the help of gods and have been given the form of cows figuratively by

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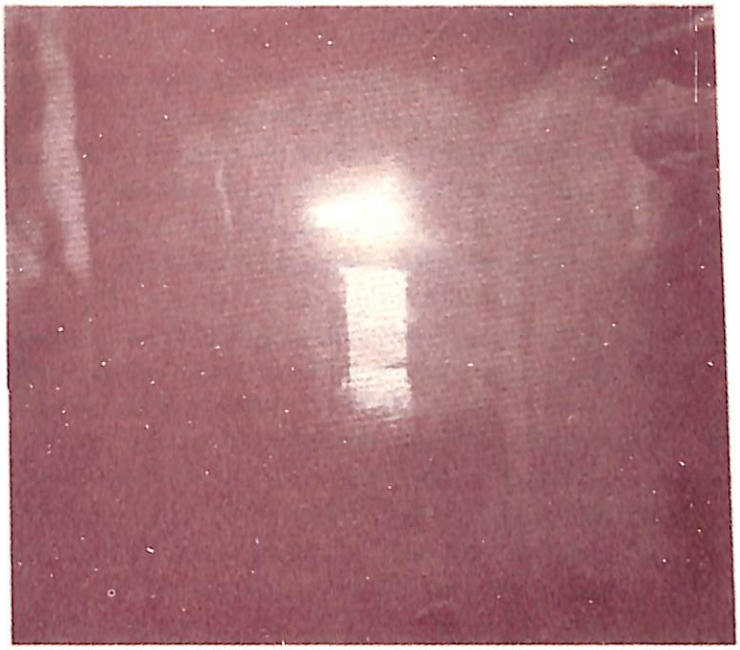
34 शतधारमुत्समक्षीयमाणं विपश्चितं पितरं वक्त्वानाम्। *Ibid., III.26.9.*

Vedic seers. *Paṇi's* cave, therefore, is the human psyche infested with the darkness of ignorance but having hidden within it the most precious knowledge possible for the human mind. Symbolisation of this knowledge by cow or more so by *ghṛta* is obviously meant for bringing out its quality of nourishing the human mind and life.



Cave

The word *guhā* occurs in the *Ṛgveda* alone more than fifty times. From its so frequent occurrence, it was concluded by Western scholars in the modern times that it was indicative of the Aryans taking their war against the aborigines to even mountainous caverns where the latter must have retreated having been defeated on the plains. But when we study the *Saṁhitā* a little carefully, we find the word *guhā* being used there in a rather symbolic sense right from the very beginning.

Use of anything concrete, such as the cave, as a symbol of something obviously abstract, does not preclude the possibility of it having played an active role in the actual life of the user. It rather all the more convincingly affirms to have played such a role, since it is only when anything gets so abundantly settled in one's psyche as to be used as an unmistakable vehicle of subtle and complex ideas that it acquires actual usability as a symbol. Thus there does not remain any doubt about it that Vedic seers were fully familiar with the spectacle of caves forming the resort of the saintly as well as the devilish in regard to their respective pursuits. Owing to its long association, this spectacle would have become so uppermost in the mind of the seer that even while dealing with extremely abstruse ideas as those relating to their *sādhanā*, they would automatically have come to make use of it to such a large extent.

In one of his mantras, *Vāmadeva*, for instance, inquires of *Agni*, the all-knowing god, to let him know as to what is the treasure and what the gem which lie at the extreme end of the cavernous path which he, on behalf of the entire humanity, is going to attain lest he might come to the sad and condemned realisation that his whole venture was undertaken all in vain.[1] It is obvious that what the seer refers to in this mantra is not just a search of a certain cave by an individual for a certain precious piece of stone or anything of the kind but to a long, arduous and venturesome journey undertaken by a multitude of people for achieving something most useful to life and most absorbing to mind. Had the former been the case, there would not have been any relevance at all of referring to the seat of *Ṛta* as the resort of the precious object which the searching party intended to obtain by rushing forth, as is recounted in the third mantra previous to it,[2] as well as of the query regarding the time when the

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1 किं नो॑ अ॒स्य द्र॒विणं॒ कद्ध॒ रत्नं॒ वि नो॑ वोचो जातवेदश्चिकि॒त्वान्।
गुहाध्व॑नः पर॒मं यन्नो॑ अ॒स्य रेकु॑ प॒दं न नि॑दा॒ना अग॑न्म।। *RV.IV.5.12.*

2 ऋ॒तस्य॑ प॒दे अधि॒ दीद्या॑नं॒ गुहा॑ रघु॒ष्यद् र॑घु॒यद् वि॑वेद। *Ibid., IV.5.9.*

primeval dawns, as the wives of immortality, might have begun to shine, as is put in the immediately following mantra.[3] The whole context, as well as the mantra concerned, on the contrary, speaks of the longest and most arduous journey humanity as a whole has ever undertaken and which ultimately is decisive of the nature of its destiny. As such, it cannot but refer to that destiny itself which the humanity is in pursuit of by means of all its undertakings through the entire course of human life in this world. This journey obviously is being kept continued by the humanity since the very beginning along the course of history and is visualised as such by the seer through his travail inward, including the conscious, the unconscious and the beyond whatever. The inquisitiveness of the seer implies not his ignorance of the phenomena but his keenness to see that what is so satisfying to him might be made available to the whole of the humanity universally, as also to give the implicit warning that, in case, this is not made possible, mankind is destined to come to the sad realisation of the total vainness of its pursuit.

This frame of thought is evident also in another relevant mantra seen by another seer *Asita* in which he recounts how the wise sees directly by means of his eye the lovely abode of the heaven kept otherwise concealed by *Adhvaryus* in the cave.[4] Obviously the heavenly abode, the object kept concealed by *Adhvaryus* in the cave and what is seen by the seer directly through his eye are essentially one and the same thing, notwithstanding the divergence in their location. Apparently the heavenly abode must be located high in the heaven while the thing kept concealed by *Adhvaryus* in the cave must be lying somewhere inside the earth, most probably in some mountainous terrain. As distinct from both of them, what the seer is capable of seeing with his peculiar eye must lie inside himself in the inmost of his being. The oneness of the object lying in three diverse places may suggest, therefore, the primacy of one of them and the secondary character of the rest of the two. In fact, primacy of the heaven or alternatively that of the seer's psyche may very well be a point of debate but so far as the cave is concerned, its secondary place in this regard is quite obvious from the placing of the thing concerned inside it having obviously removed the same no matter whether from the heaven or from the psyche of the seer. Since the entire action of *Adhvaryu* is based on the

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3 कुदा नो देवीरमृतस्य पत्नीः सूरो वर्णेन ततनन्नुषासः। *Ibid., IV.5.13.*

4 अभि प्रिया दिवस्पदमध्वर्युभिर्गुहाहितम्।
सूरः पश्यति चक्षसा।। *Ibid., IX.10.9.*

vision of the reality coming to the seer rather than on the reality itself directly, it seems correct in all probability to surmise that the cave of *Adhvaryu* is brought in with a view to giving concrete shape to the seer's psyche, the actual locale of the seeing of the reality in all its blessedness. The common features of secrecy and inwardness peculiar to both the psyche and the cave seem to be the determinant of selection of the cave to symbolise the psyche.

On this point, it would be interesting to remind ourselves of Plato's well-known allegory of the cave which tells us how the human mind is comparable to a cave lying in which with one's face turned eclusively inside one can see only what of the reality is reflected from outside and not the reality itself. If the *Adhvaryu's* cave is kindred to Plato's on account of having concealed inside it the precious heavenly stuff, the Vedic seer's eye defies the Platonic scheme of things by seeing the same stuff directly without taking recourse to its reflection in the cave. For the common man, however, the *Adhvaryu's* cave is highly useful inasmuch as it gives necessary tangibility to the otherwise extremely subtle spiritual stuff and makes it thus understandable to him.

Adhvaryu is incharge of the manual work involved in the performance of sacrifice. He dwells amidst people recreating for them tangibly the vision of the seer in the form of the sacrificial spectacle and action. The sacrificial ground or more precisely the sacrificial pit itself is intended to serve as a symbol of the cave where the precious heavenly stuff can very well be discovered by the common man. What lies actually in the heaven beyond space and time and is capable of being seen directly by the seer in his spiritual vision and is also searched for by the *yogin* by dwelling in the cave, can be met with by the common man by means of sacrifice as arranged by *Adhvaryu* in his symbolic cave.

The symbol of cave plays a significant role not only in the recovery of the content of the seer's vision by the *yogin* and its concrete representation by *Adhvaryu* in the form of the infrastructure of the sacrifice but also sometimes in the seer's effort to give a suitable verbal expression to it. A direct reference in this regard is the famous mantra seen by *Brhaspati*, the god of mantras, himself. Addressing *Bṛhaspati* by *Bṛhaspati* himself bears out the intimateness of expression involved in the mantra. It amounts to saying that just as in the case of a babbling child the most fundamental sounds come out of it in the beginning from within it to get articulated subsequently in the form of names of objects, even so the most

primary and best form of speech has come out of the seers having so far been kept concealed within their psyche, as if in a cave, and getting now manifested.[5] In this mantra seer explicitly conceives of the cave as a symbol of the human psyche serving as the secret source of words and indeed of speech as such. There is another mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* which talks of four stages in the vocalisation of things. According to it, the actual steps involved in the production of speech are four but the earlier three steps lie hidden inscrutable in the cave while it is only the fourth step which comes to serve as the point of articulation by mankind.[6]

There is yet another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva* making use of the symbol of cave to suggest to the secretness, sacredness and potential utility of words uttered by him articulating his vision. The seer himself is astonished to think of these qualities of his words. He wonders as to how to describe these words which, as he observes, have been characterised by knowledgeable people as the quintessence kept concealed inside a cave. Elaborating on this cryptic statement he further observes regarding the nature of his words that they are like the milk of cows milked out, taken up, digested and transformed into energy, spiritual as well as physical and deployed in the protection of the highest values of life.[7] If the ordinary word is the cow, the Vedic one is the milk of that cow. And if the ordinary word is the milk, the Vedic one is the energy formed out of it or the *ghṛta* derived from it. This abstraction of the essence of ordinary words or rather the capability of articulation in the form of the Vedic words is indeed taking the most desirable object out of the cave. Since the entire process of abstraction and purification takes place inside the psyche of the seer, the cave involved in this process cannot but be symbolic of that psyche itself.

The symbol of cave has been used sometimes in regard to the discovery of *Agni* also. *Agni* is described at one place as sitting inside a cave and holding something precious for gods and as capable of being known by people who can hold mantras composed from the core of the heart and

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5 बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं यत् प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः।
यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत् प्रेणा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः।। *Ibid., X.71.1.*

6 चत्वारि वाक्परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति।। *Ibid., I.164.45*

7 प्र वाच्यं वचसः किं मे अस्य गुहाहितमुपनिणिग्वदन्ति।
यदुस्रियाणामपवारिव व्रन् पाति प्रियं रुपो अग्रं पदं वेः।। *Ibid., IV.5.8.*

chant them with devotion.[8] In the next but one mantra in the same hymn it again is observed that *Agni* unveils upon him alone the mystery of precious things who knows how *Agni* conceals himself in the cave, who sits constantly in the stream of *Ṛta* as also weaves the cloth of life in close contact with *Ṛta*.[9] Obviously the self-concealment of *Agni* in a cave must have to do something intimately with its knower's sitting in the stream of *Ṛta* and weaving the cloth of his life in close contact with *Ṛta*. At the least, we can understand by *Agni's* concealment in the cave its return to the principle of *Ṛta*. If so, this cave would be equivalent to the mysterious principle of *Ṛta* remaining imperceptible but determining everything from within.

Cave occurs as a symbol in the context of the feats of *Indra* in a detailed way. In a mantra seen by *Parucchepa* there is an account of *Indra* rescuing something heavenly from a cave. While giving details of the cave, it has been observed that it was a cave inside stone and surrounded by an inestimable mass of stone. Even then *Indra* entered into the cave and recovered precious heavenly object from it. This astonishing discovery of him has been compared to that of the bird which discovers its young one out of the egg by making a hole into it. What this precious heavenly object is which is rescued from the cave is not made out explicitly in at least the first part of the mantra. *Sāyaṇa* understands it as *Soma* which was fetched by *Gāyatrī* assuming the form of an eagle. But more relevant than *Soma* is the cow since it forms the main object of *Indra's* discovery in the second part of the mantra which seems to be explanatory of what is stated cryptically in the first part. In this second part it has been stated that *Indra*, the wielder of thunderbolt, discovered, the enclosure of cows assuming the role of the leader of the *Aṅgirasas*, flung open the door of the enclosure and drove out the precious cows from it.[10] Obviously it is cows which in the last part of the mantra have been mentioned as *iṣaḥ*, the desired objects. As such, there is no difficulty in identifying them with

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8 हस्ते॒ दधा॑नो नृ॒म्णा विश्वा॒न्यमे॑ दे॒वान् धा॒द् गुहा॑ नि॒षीद॑न्।
वि॒दन्ती॒मत्र॒ नरो॑ धि॒यं धा हृ॒दा यत्त॒ष्टान् मन्त्रा॑ँ अशंसन्। । *Ibid., I.67.2.*

9 य ई॑ चि॒केत॒ गुहा॒भव॑न्तमा य स॒साद॒ धारा॑मृ॒तस्य॑।
वि ये चृ॒तन्त्यृ॒ता सप॑न्त॒ आदिद् व॑सू॒नि॒ प्र व॑वाचास्मै। । *Ibid., I.67.4.*

10 अवि॑न्दद्दि॒वो नि॑हि॒तं॒ गुहा॑ नि॒धिं वेर्न गर्भं॒
परि॑ वीत॒मश्म॑न्यन्ते अ॒न्तरश्म॑नि।
व्र॒जं व॒ज्री गवा॑मिव॒ सिषा॑स॒न्नङ्गि॑रस्तमः।
अपा॑वृणो॒दिष॒ इन्द्रः॑ परी॑वृता॒ द्वार॒ इष॒ः परी॑वृताः। । *Ibid, I.130.3.*

the *nidhi* of the first part of the mantra. Having settled this much, we are now in a position to conclude that it is cows themselves which form the precious heavenly object kept concealed in the cave formed in stone and surrounded by an inestimably huge mass of stone such as a big mountain, like the *Himalayas*.

But the constant shifting in the nature of the object thus recovered from the cave by *Indra* creates the suspicion that it also may not be an actual cow. This suspicion gets strengthened by another mantra where it is not cow which is the object of discovery by *Indra* but some sort of honey kept preserved in the cow and being at the same time endowed with feet and hooves. Interestingly enough, this honey also is said to have been kept concealed in a cave as well as in waters.[11]This account obviously mystifies the whole thing again. The honey of this account cannot be honey at all, particularly when it has been endowed with feet and hooves and then is said to have been found out from cows which themselves are presented as a cave. It is significant to note that, just as in the mantra quoted immediately prior to this one, there was an account of a cave formed inside a cave wherein was found out the cow or the precious object of desire, even so in this mantra the cow, found understandably in a cave, herself begins to play the role of cave having concealed within her the fantastic honey endowed with feet and hooves. Obviously this honey cannot be anything but the calf of the cow by virtue of having feet and hooves as well as being most loving not only to the cow but also to the onlooker. This conclusion also falls in line with the imagery of the bird discovering its young one from within the egg, as recounted in the mantra immediately preceding it.

Looked at from this perspective, the entire account of the cave within the cave and the calf within the cow, etc. boils down to the peculiar spectacle of matter giving birth to life and life in its turn giving birth to another life. The cave within the cave surrounded by an infinitely huge mass of stone or mountain is the nucleus of matter yielding eventually life from within it, not, however, spontaneously but through the agency of *Indra*. How Indra himself has found his entry into this fantastic scenario, is indicated by another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva*. It is said of *Indra* in the mantra that his mother *Aditi*, having considered him as somewhat fallen from high pedestal, put him in a cave having invested in him abundant strength. It is out of that cave, so goes the account, that he has stood up

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11 इन्दो॒ मधु॑ सम्भृ॒तमु॒स्रिया॑यां प॒द्वद्वि॑वेद॒ शफ॑वन्नमे॒ गोः।
गुहा॑हि॒तं गु॒ह्यमप्सु हस्ते॑ दधे॒ दक्षि॑णे॒ दक्षि॑णावान्॥ *Ibid., III.39.6.*

on his own having clothed himself with dynamics and has filled up the entire space forming the receptacle of the heaven and the earth through his manifestation.[12] It is due to this peculiar act of *Aditi,* the ultimate Creatrix, that there obtains veritable equivalence between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. Having been thrown into the cave by the Creatrix and having thus acquired infinite quantum of energy in that compressed form, Indra rebounds to reclaim his original cosmic form extending from the earth to the heaven and thus plays his role in the expanding and stabiling the universe, punishing the agent of contraction and obstruction such as *Vṛtra* and giving promotion to the forces of expansion such as the Aryans. It is due to this dynamics of him that life has emerged out of matter and is giving birth to another life out of itself. He indeed is what is called the *antaryāmin* in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and is said to indwell the earth, water, fire, space, heaven, etc. as their soul incognito and control them from inside as the principle of immortality.[13]

That the Vedic cave is scarcely the physical cave is evident also from several other mantras addressed to gods different from *Indra.* In one of *Gṛtsamada's* mantras, for instance, *Agni* is prayed to provide the seer and his followers that strength by virtue of which having been enriched in heroes and having overcome the enmity within them they now fallen in the cave, may come out of it.[14] Here since the seer aspires to come out of the cave by having overcome the sense of enmity, which out and out is a psychological business, the cave must symbolise something deeply psychological, be it the state of depression, morbidity, ignorance or anything else of the sort.

Similarly, there is another mantra seen by *Kakṣīvat* in which there is an account of the succession of day and night. Though kindred to each other, while one of them comes forward, the other moves backward and gets hurled by darkness in a cave.[15] Needless to point out that in this mantra,

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12 अव॒द्यमि॑व मन्य॒माना॒ गुहा॑क॒रिन्द्रं॑ मा॒ता वी॒र्येण॒ न्यृ॑ष्टम्।
अथोद॑स्थात् स्व॒यमत्क॑ं॒ वसा॑न आ रोद॑सी अपृणा॒ज्जाय॑मानः।। *Ibid., IV.18.5.*

13 यः पृथिव्यां तिष्ठन् पृथिव्या अन्तरः यं पृथिवी न वेद यस्य पृथिवी शरीरम्।
यः पृथिवीमन्तरो यमयति एष त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः। *Brh. Up.III.7.3-23.*

14 त्वया॒ यथा॑ गृत्सम॒दासो॑ अग्ने॒ गुहा॑ व॒न्वन्त॒ उप॑रा॒ अभि॑ष्युः।
सुवी॒रासो॑ अभिमा॒ति॒षाहः॒ स्मत्सू॒रिभ्यो॑ गृण॒ते तद्वयो॑ धाः।। *RV., II.4.9.*

15 अपा॒न्यदे॑त्य॒भ्य॒न्यदे॑ति॒ विषु॑रूपे॒ अह॑नी॒ सञ्च॑रेते।
परि॒क्षितो॒स्तमो॑ अ॒न्या गुहा॑क॒रद्यौ॑दु॒षाः शो॑शुचता॒ रथे॑न।। *Ibid.,I.123.7.*

cave has been used as a symbol of darkness and concealment. Similar to it is the use of cave in another mantra addressed to *Aśvins* where it has been observed that while three of the footsteps of them are manifest, the fourth one lies concealed in a cave as these wise deities lie ahead of living beings owing to their wings of *Ṛta*.[16] If in the previous mantra, the cave stood for regressive concealment of things, in this mantra, it symbolises the source, most probably the future part of time, from which things are getting manifested. There is yet another mantra seen by *Sutambhara Ātreya* in which *Agni* is said to have remained lying concealed in a cave having taken resort to forests and to have been discovered by *Āṅgirasas*.[17] If in the previous two examples, the cave of concealment operates through the past and the future respectively, in the latest one it works in the present itself serving as a virtual cave where the god has kept himself hidden and is prone to manifestation through rubbing of any pair of sticks.[18] In contradistinction to this earthly cave of *Agni*, there is an account, in one of the mantras seen by *Viśvāmitra*, of two highest planes of being lying in a cave while the third lower one being visible. As is evident from the rest of the mantra recounting how there is one eternally constant entity which bears on itself all the six loads with its virile *Ṛta* being approached by cows, the two highest planes of being are said to be lying in a cave on account of their invisibility or rather unknowability to the common man. It is perhaps this type of account of cave which subsequently in *tantra* and allied *yogic* literature has served as the prototype of idea of the *gagana guhā*, the cave in the sky.

It is evident from the above details that cave in the vocabulary of the Vedic seer had no more remained a representative of any actual hole in the earth, be it in the mountainous region or on plain land as it had come to acquire a definite secondary connotation in relationship to space, time and substance, imperceptibility by the common man and perceptibility by the wise. It happened to be associated with the wisdom of sacrificial acts as well as with the search for the essence of words both semantic and phonetic. It also came to symbolise the transcendent Being's

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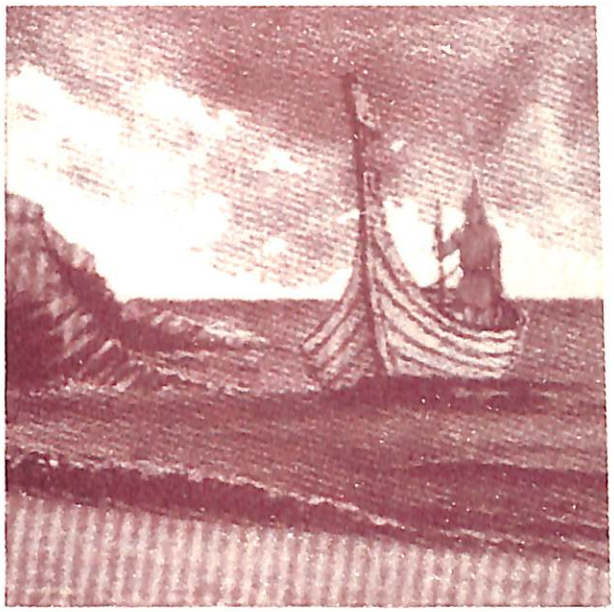
16 त्रीणि पदान्यश्विनोरविः सान्ति गुहा परः।
कवी ऋतस्य पत्मभिर्वाग्जीवेभ्यस्परि।। *Ibid., VIII.8.23.*

17 त्वामग्ने अङ्गिरसो गुहाहितमन्वविन्दच्छिश्रियाणं वने वने। *Ibid., V.11.6.*

18 त्वामग्ने अङ्गिरसो गुहाहितमन्वविन्दच्छिश्रियाणं वने वने।
स जायसे मथ्यमानः सहो महत्त्वामाहुः सहसस्पुत्रमङ्गिरः।। *Ibid., V.11.6.*

individualisation of himself on the one hand and universalisation on the other leading thus to emergence of the bipolar reality of the world. Any interpretation of the Veda which does not take notice of these connotations of this key word, is, therefore, bound to fail badly in its objective.



Boat

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Boat has been referred to in the *Ṛgveda* more than three dozen times. This abundance of reference to boat goes counter to the theory of Aryan invasion. So far as horse and chariot are concerned, they, for a while, may be allowed to accord with the theory to some extent as the invaders might have used them in advancing from the West to the East and the South. But none of the rivers of India flows directly from the West to the East or South so as to have required the use of boat for further advancement at that early period of India history contemporaneous to or immediately preceding the composition of the mantras, as is presumed by the theory. And incidentally in none of those mantras having reference to boat there is any account of war. All of them are related to peacetime problems. As such, use of boat by the Vedic people at that early stage to this extent does not go well with the theory or rather goes counter to the basic postulate of the theory.

As regards the nature of the references, there is one very obvious one to boats sailing on the sea. The antiquity of the mantra is evident from *Varuṇa* being the addressee of it, for the postulate has been made that *Varuṇa*, as compared to *Indra*, is an earlier god and had his ascendancy even in the Indo-Iranian period when the Iranians branched off the advancing stream with *Ahura Mazda* as their supreme deity, which is none but what occurs as *asura mahān* in the Veda qualifying *Varuṇa*. According to the mantra in question, *Varuṇa* knows the course of birds flying in the sky as well as that of boats sailing on the sea.[1] Now before *Varuṇa* could know the boats sailing on the sea, it was essential for the so-called invading Aryans themselves to have known the sea itself, which has been denied to them under the plea that there is no mention of salt in the Veda. So positive a mention of ocean as this, therefore, not only shows the baselessness of the theory of invasion and gradual advancement of the invaders from the West to the coastal areas but also bears out firm settlement of the people in the whole land up to the coastal areas and their taking sojourns even on the sea by means of boats. From our present viewpoint, however, this is only a matter-of-fact account of boat in the Veda indicating to the extent to which the divinity concerned is conscious of whatever is happening in the world not only within the reach

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1 वेदा॒ यो वी॒नां प॒दम॒न्तरि॑क्षेण॒ पत॑ताम्।
वेद॑ ना॒वः स॑मु॒द्रिय॑ः।। *RV.I.25.7.*

of man but also beyond it including the path of birds flying in the sky and boats sailing on the sea. Use of boat, however, had got so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the people that even seers, not having much to do with boats, made use of the spectacle of boat sailing on water in the communication of ideas very much detached from the spectacle. In one of his mantras, *Atri*, for instance, speaks out on behalf of his followers as well as himself that they are praying to *Agni*, the mighty god, so that he may take them beyond the reach of adversaries of all varieties like the boatsman taking one by boat across a channel of water.[2] In this simile, the channel of water is envisaged as a barrier which prevents enemies from reaching the seer and his followers and obstructing the latter from accomplishing their noble work which is in keeping with the wishes of *Agni*, the doer of noble works. In another mantra, the seer concerned makes use of the same simile in connection with *Agni* himself clarifying further the motive of his intention to go across the channel. Take us across all impediments, O *Agni*, the seer observes, for our well being, like a boatsman taking people across a river by means of his boat, and burn all our sinful acts.[3] It is important to note that while in the previous mantra the reason behind the wish to go across through the help of Agni was to go beyond the reach of evil-doers, here it is to reach the state of complete sinlessness. In view of complete oneness of the spectacle of crossing by boat used in both the mantras, one may be justified in equating the enemies of the prior mantra with the sin of the latter one. This proposition gets positive support from another mantra seen by the same *Ātreya* where *Agni* has been prayed to take the seer across the river by means of his boat.[4] That this motif was so dear to the Vedic seer is evident from *Mārica Kāśyapa* using it in his sole mantra in the *Samhitā* where he prays to *Agni* to take him and his followers across otherwise ineliminable misdeeds like the boatsman taking one across the river.[5] The idea becomes still clearer in another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* where it has explicitly been stated that the seer produces mantras whenever inspiration comes to him and intends to pray to *Indra* before the day comes to an end so that the latter may take him across along with his followers, as people on both sides of the bank of the river, it seems, were

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2 एवाँ अग्निं वसूयवः सहसानं ववन्दिम।
स नो विश्वा अति द्विषः पर्षन्नावेव सुक्रतुः।। *Ibid., V.25.9.*

3 स नः सिन्धुमिव नावयातिपर्षः स्वस्तये।
अप नः शोशुचदघम्।। *Ibid., I.97.8.*

4 विश्वानि नो दुर्गहा जातवेदः सिन्धुं न नावा दुरितानि पर्षि। *Ibid., V.4.9.*

5 जातवेदसे सुनवाम सोममरातीयतो नि दहाति वेदः।
स नः पर्षदति दुर्गाणि विश्वा नावेव सिन्धुं दुरितात्यग्निः।। *Ibid.,I.99.1.*

invoking him while he was moving by his boat.[6] Here obviously what the seer desires to go across in his prayer is nothing but the sense of sin lingering in his mind. Day here symbolises the span of life.

There is another mantra seen by *Vasiṣṭha* in which the imagery of boat has been used to indicate to the role of *Ṛta*, the principle of universal order, in serving as the dynamic medium through which the divine works in saving man from the consequences of his own evil acts as well as the impediments coming in incidentally in his path. Both, the consequences and the impediments, have been suggested by the word *durita*, bad or difficult in action or movement. *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, as the agencies of *Ṛta* are supposed to have a trap by means of which they entrap the falsehood of the people or indeed the evil-doers themselves. Their trap is so large as no one can escape out of it. It is the victims of this trap who are taken as enemies. In the state of this divine dispensation, to make oneself so innocent, pure and noble as not to get entrapped must be the greatest problem before the man of understanding. In the interest of such people, the imagery which is used by *Vasiṣṭha* in showing the way out bears out the depth of his vision. Ordeals of both the kinds are considered by him as a river while the path of *Ṛta* as maintained by them is envisaged as a boat by the use of which the seer intends to sail across that river.[7] The same motif occurs in a mantra seen by *Bharadvāja* also notwithstanding partial change in the deity of the mantra. Instead of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* of the above mantra, here it is *Indra* and *Varuṇa* who have been invoked by the seer to make them go across all impediments, internal as well as external, like the river crossed by a boat.[8]

The motif of river and boat occurs in a mantra seen by *Sthaura* also in an entirely different context. Here instead of enemy, enmity, sin and external impediments, the reservoir of water stands for the speech which serves as the medium for floating ideas and sentiments as boats. In this simile, the mantras get symbolised by oars serving as means by which the boat is made to move and reach its destination in the divine. The reservoir of

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6 विवेष यन्मा धिषणा जजानु स्तवै पुरा पार्यादिन्द्रमह्नः।
अहंसो यत्र पीपरद् यथा नो नावेव यान्तमुभये हवन्ते।। *Ibid.,III.32.14*

7 ता भूरिपाशावनृतस्य सेतू दुरत्येतू रिपवे मर्त्याय।
ऋतस्य मित्रावरुणा पथा वामपो न नावा दुरिता तरेम।। *Ibid., VII.65.3.*

8 नू नं इन्द्रावरुणा गृणाना पृङ्क्त रयिं सौश्रवसाय देवा।
इत्था गृणन्तो महिनस्य शर्धोऽपो न नावा दुरिता तरेम।। *Ibid., VI.68.8.*

water also changes its character here. Instead of the river, it appears as the ocean symbolising speech. Just as boats are made to sail on the ocean to a certain destination, even so the seer sends forth his ideas by means of mantras to reach the divine, particularly in the form of *Indra* and *Agni*.[9] In another mantra seen by *Gṛtsamada, Indra* is conceived as a bird and his instrumentality in the emergence of mantras as the oar used in sailing the boat of words.[10]

So frequent and repeated use of boat to bring out concretely the seer's desire and determination to get completely redeemed of evils, internal as well as external, and attain to the divine help for self-expansion and spiritual elevation bears amply well the possibility of proceeding a step further and making use of the imagery freely as a symbol of the same ideas and thus give expression to them more powerfully. Needless to point out that while simile creates the sense of similitude by showing some sort of akinness between the two sides of the similitude, the symbol bears out the object symbolised boldly and tangibly by making the two sides coalesce with each other and produce a compound effect. When we observe: "*This man is like a lion*", an idea of the person's some sort of similarity with lion is brought home to the listener, but still the man remains man in all other respects. But when, on the other hand, we observe with respect to the same person "*Lo, the lion has come*", the thing gets totally transformed. The man does no more remain the poor man but gets transformed totally in ideation as well as feeling into a being full of limitless courage, spirit of adventure and strength. Indeed, the quantum of difference between simile and symbol is almost of the same magnitude as it lies between a man bearing some resemblance with lion on the one hand and one appearing really infused with the spirit of lion.

To apply the same formula to the cases under discussion, when the Vedic seer observes that to go beyond the reach of evils by the help of the divine is like crossing a river by a boat, the effect is qualitatively and quantitatively both different from that produced by the observation: "*The boat of the divinity has taken me across the river.*" In this latter statement, the boat gets charged with the power and felicity of the divine while the river sinks down to the rank of the devilish. It is this basic psychology of the symbolic usage which is embodied in *Yāska's* famous observation that what appear as a chariot, horse, bow and arrow of the divine are simply

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9 प्रेन्द्राग्निभ्यां सुवचस्यामियर्मि सिन्धाविव प्रेरयं नावमर्कैः।
अर्या इव परि चरन्ति देवा ये अस्मभ्यं धनदा उदभिर्दशच।। *Ibid., X.116.9*

10 कनिक्रदज्जनुषं प्रब्रुवाण इयर्ति वाचमरितेव नावम्। *Ibid., II.42.1.*

the self of the divine itself.[11]

On account of the effectiveness of the symbolic usage, the Vedic seer, in course of his use of similes, rises very often to the height of symbols by getting the kindred similes fully matured. As it is mostly similes which get matured into symbols, the use of similes in the Veda is of immense help in the decipherment of symbols. To illustrate the point, while earlier we saw seers praying to gods to extend their help for making them go across their enemies, evils, weaknesses, hindrances, etc. as a boat helping one in need of crossing a river, there is no dearth of such mantras also where it has straightaway and powerfully been wished that *Indra*, being invoked by a large number of people simultaneously, may take all of them, including the seer himself, across all enmities by his boat, as he is used to do so.[12] Similarly with regard to a particular mantra or set of mantras, it has been prayed to *Varuṇa* to sharpen the creative will and efficiency of the seer by means of which, used as an easily and confidently sailable boat, he, along with his companions or indeed people like him may go across all blemishes of character as well as obstacles coming in the way.[13] The mantra addressed to the divine evokes creative will and efficiency in the seer. It is this will as well as the efficiency produced by it which is conceived as a boat capable of taking one across the river of inner blemishes, weaknesses and evils. Such inner purification results in the removal of external impediments also to a great extent. This creative will is symbolised here by the boat sailing across the turbulent river. Another seer of the same tradition prays to *Maruts* to protect possibly the same boat symbolising the will operating day and night so that by sailing it he, as well as others of the kind, may feel always protected by them.[14] Similarly in another mantra addressed to *Aśvins*, another seer, namely *Praskaṇva*, prays to them to come to him by means of their chariot so that he may go across a certain river, possibly the river of life, by means of the boat constructed out of his prayers.[15] Obviously the boat constructed

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11 आत्मैव एषां रथो भवति आत्मा अश्वः आत्मा आयुधम् आत्मा इषवः। *Nirukta VII.4.*

12 स नः॒ पर्षि॑ः पारयाति स्व॒स्ति ना॒वा पु॑रुहू॒तः।
इन्द्रो॒ विश्वा॒ अति॒ द्विषः॑। । *RV. VIII.16.11.*

13 इ॒मां धियं॒ शिक्ष॑माणस्य देव क्र॒तुं दक्षं॑ वरुण॒ सं शि॑शाधि।
यया॒ति॒ विश्वा॑ दुरि॒ता तरे॑म सु॒तर्मा॑णमधि॒ नावं॑ रुहेम। । *Ibid., VIII.42.3.*

14 ते नो॑ ना॒वमु॑रुष्यत॒ दिवा॒नक्तं॑ सुदानवः।
अरि॑ष्यन्तो॒ नि॑पा॒युभिः॑ सचेमहि। । *Ibid., VIII.25.11.*

15 आ नो॑ ना॒वा म॑ती॒नां या॑तं पा॒राय॑ गन्त॒वे।
यु॒ञ्जाथा॑मश्विना॒ रथ॑म्। । *Ibid., I.46.7.*

out of mantras is no boat at all in any realistic sense. But, if taken symbolically, it very well assumes the role of the boat in the form of the will mentioned already to take one across the river of life, howsoever turbulent. The prayer to the divine purifies and energises the will so that it becomes capable of passing through the course of life safe and sound. This is what the seer talks of in terms of construction of the boat out of prayers addressed to *Aśvins*.

In the immediately following mantra, the oar of *Aśvins* has been visualised by the same seer as wider than the heaven while their chariot has been viewed as placed at a spot where rivers are fordable. This chariot is also said to have been yoked with mantra by *Soma*.[16] In this mantra consisting of seemingly discordant ingredients, the basic point of concordance is the magnanimity of the divine symbolised by the oar on the one hand and the chariot on the other. The larger-than-heaven oar of *Aśvins* bears out the limitlessness of the divine help while positioning of their chariot on fordable point on the bank of rivers signifies the effectiveness of the divine in crossing over the river of life. Yoking of *Soma* to the chariot of intellect, on the other hand, is symbolic of reaching the state of delight through the prayer. The same prayer, indeed, serves as the oar of the boat of divine grace on the one hand and the horse of the chariot of divine help on the other. This interpretation gets confirmation from another mantra seen by *Budha* which asks seers to create sonorous mantras, make the prayerful mind extend around and use such mind as the proper oar of the boat of life.[17] In another mantra addressed to *Soma* also it has been stated that the latter as the king clothes himself with rivers as his dress and as such takes his seat in the straightest boat of *Ṛta*.[18] Making rivers as the clothe of king *Soma* is symbolic of the pervasion of rivers by *Soma* as the principle of liquidity, coolness and movement. It is due to the operation of this principle that water takes to the shortest and possibly most straightforward route in its flow. With a view to bringing out these ideas, *Ṛta* has been symbolised by boat of the straightest variety, having seated in it King *Soma* using rivers as his clothes. All this simply means that *Ṛta* is the boat sailing on the straightest possible course along with King *Soma* as the passenger seated on it. Just akin to this, there is another mantra where truth has been symbolised by boat which takes people doing noble

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16 अरित्रं॑ वां दि॒वस्पृ॒थु ती॒र्थे सिन्धू॑नां॒ रथः॑।
धि॒या यु॑युज्र इन्द॒वः॥ *Ibid.*,*I.46.8.*

17. मन्द्रा कृ॑णुध्वं॒ धि॒य आ त॑नुध्वं॒ नाव॑मरित्र॒पर्णीं॑ कृणुध्वम्। *Ibid.*,*X.101.2.*

18 राजा॒ सिन्धू॑नामवसिष्ट॒ वास॑ ऋ॒तस्य॒ नावु॒मारु॑ह॒-दर्जि॑ष्ठाम्। *Ibid.*,*IX.89.2.*

deeds across the turbulent river of the world.[19] To conceive of *Ṛta* and *Satya* as a boat capable of making one ford the river of the world bears out admittance of the deeply moral order in the working of the world. It is some such boat symbolising *Ṛta* which has been wished for by *Dīrghatamas* to serve as his chariot as well as home having oars operating around it permanently and as capable of treading like a footed being and not only capable of taking heroic and liberal persons in the society across the river of life and the world but also being in a position to provide them with proper protection and blessedness.[20] This boat evidently cannot be but symbolical of the same principle of *Ṛta* as referred to earlier. The oars working on it constantly and permanently symbolise its automatic and constant mobility. Choosing it as one's permanent home notwithstanding its constant mobility is suggestive of its stableness even in the midst of its movement which in itself bears out the perfectly rhythmic character of its movement. The idea of its footedness is symbolical of it being living, conscious and endowed with intelligence. Its capacity to take not only an individual but deserving classes of people as a whole across the river suggests its universality while the expectation of provision of delight to all its inmates from it shows the duration as well as the end of the journey by this boat in complete blessedness. How beautiful, elaborate and fascinating a symbolical representation of an ideal state of things in the worldly life embodying constant mobility as well as stability, end-orientedness as well as constant rejoicing culminating in complete blessedness!

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19 सत्यस्य नावः सुकृतमपीपरन्।। *Ibid., IX.73.1.*

20 रथाय नावमुत नो गृहाय नित्यारित्रां पद्वतीं रास्यग्ने।
अस्माकं वीरां उत नो मघोनो जनांश्च या पारयाच्छर्म या च।। *Ibid., I.140.12.*

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The same boat symbolising *Ṛta* has been referred to in a rather elaborate way in another mantra seen by *Gaya Plāta* in which the protective earth, the taintless sky, the profoundly wise *Aditi* as the guide, all combined together have been conceived as a divine boat provided with suitable oars, completely defectless and unleaking and is desired to be boarded in for the sake of well-being.[1] While heaven and earth combined bear out the totality of space, addition of *Aditi* to it endows it with time, the points of start and final culmination as well as the profound motherly care, love and wisdom. Such a magnificent boat is the totality of the reality we are sailing in. The realisation of the divine character of this boat must have required a mighty divine vision on behalf of its seer.

There is yet another mantra talking of sacrifice as a boat. According to it, those invokers of gods who saw the mantras for the first time have a destiny distinct from the commonplace one. It involves conceiving of sacrifice as a boat and making use of it in reaching the divine. In contrast to it, the commonplace way of life is to treat the earth itself as the end as well as the origin of life. Followers of this view treat the earth as all in all. They work throughout the whole life for material prosperity exclusively and never do realise the contribution of higher planes of being to their making. As the *Yajurveda* has it, the human personality seems to be made apparently of clay and water but as a matter of fact water and clay are only suppliers of food and drink to the person while the crux of his personality has its origin in the divine Creator, *Viśvakarman*. The divine Architect, namely *Tvaṣṭṛ*, takes over this divine stuff and goes on assuming one form after the other until eventually it reaches its divine destiny.[2] Those who do not recognise the significance and higher origin of constituents of the human personality other than the physical, remain debtors to those sources and therefore instead of ascending to them they continue to be tied down to the earth even after easing to continue in the

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1 सुत्रामाणं पृथिवीं द्यामनेहसं सुशर्माणमदितिं सुप्रणीतिम्।
दैवीं नावं स्वरित्रामनागसमस्रवन्तीमारुहेमा स्वस्तये।। *RV.,X.63.10.*

2 अद्भ्यः संभृतः पृथिव्यै रसाच्च विश्वकर्मणः समवर्तताग्रे।
तस्य त्वष्टा विदधद्रूपमेति तन्मर्त्यस्य देवत्वमाजानमग्रे।। *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā XXXI.17.*

physical form.[3] The Vedic seers, on the other hand, understood the make of the human personality in its entire complexity and devoted their lives and attention to tracing the sources of those constituents. An idea of their rigour in this respect can be had from a mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* in which he asks as to who knows exactly the source of what was born first when the boneless bore the bony. Continuing his inquiry he observes that as regards breath, blood, etc., they obviously are derived from the physical, but the real problem is the source of the *Vāyu* itself?[4]

By way of tracing the constituents of the human personality to their respective sources, seers have come to the conclusion that man's indebtedness in this regard is confined not to the earth but extends much beyond it to the heaven and indeed to the ultimate Creatrix of the universe, known as *Aditi*. Having his origin and final destination both in them together, he in no way is separable from them. And yet he has a certain destiny which necessarily he has to undergo by himself as well as by virtue of being an inseparable part of the universe. In view of this background, the cosmos has been envisioned by the seer as a massive boat sailing on the sea of the Reality. This boat obviously provides for the individual interests also, for he is a part and parcel of it. But, over all, it is guided by the universal interest. For the sake of fulfilment of that interest, the individual has to rise above his limited self-interest. This is the sacrifice he has necessarily to make if he is sensitive enough to visualise the cosmos as a boat of sacrifice. The components of this boat are the earth, the heaven and *Aditi*, the ultimate Creatrix. They all three combined undergo one uniform movement under the direction and guidance of *Ṛta*, as they have to move as per the rhythm of *Ṛta*. Looked from this viewpoint, the cosmos looks like a boat sailing on the surface of the Reality. Those who lead their life by treating themselves as a part and parcel of this magnificent voyage, are to be taken as passengers of this boat of sacrifice and as such they have a divine destiny before them. One day or the other they are destined to reach this end and enjoy the divine felicity. Those, on the other hand, who treat themselves as creatures of mere earth, get bound to it until, of course, any such consciousness gets awakened in them by virtue of which they are able to rise above the earthly consciousness and feel themselves as a necessary part of the grand whole voyaging together.

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3 पृथुक्प्रायन् प्रथमा देवहूतयोऽकृण्वत श्रवस्यानि दुष्टरा।
न ये शेकुर्यज्ञियां नावमारुहमीर्मैव ते न्यविशन्त केपयः।। *RV.X.44.6.*

4 को ददर्श प्रथमं जायमानं अस्थन्वन्तं यदनस्था बिभर्ति।
भूम्या असुरसृगात्मा क्व स्वित् को विद्वांसमुप गात् प्रष्टुमेतत्।। *Ibid.,I.164.4.*

The idea of this grand voyage remained predominant during the Vedic age as is evident from the *Yajurveda's* enunciation of the philosophy of detachment in view of the ever-changing scenario of life.[5] Subsequently during the Brahmanic period, however, it seems to have fallen into disrepute due to identification of Ṛta with mere sacrifice performed by humans in their self-interest, governed particularly by the idea of attaining to heaven through the performance of a certain sacrifice.[6] This state of things in the history of the idea is very well reflected in the pertinent observation of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* characterising sacrifice as an unsound boat inasmuch as it comprises sheer eighteen actions of rather lower type and is accomplished just mechanically. If one considers this much alone as the *summum bonum* of life, the *Upaniṣad* warns, he, to be sure, cannot escape the trap of birth and death.[7] Apart from this decadence in the idea not only at that stage but throughout the history subsequently in certain respects at the lower level, it at the higher level has continued to hold its ground particularly through the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*, though, incidentally, this particular imagery does nowhere occur there in the whole of the text. It, however, gets a magnificent philosophical form in Sri Aurobindo's *Integral Yoga* and *Vedanta* treating whole life, individual as well as cosmic, as a Yoga against the background of the process of descent and ascent undertaken by the Supreme leading to divinisation of life on earth. To translate this philosophy in terms of the Vedic imagery, while proceeding in search of its divine destiny, life on earth will not be required necessarily to relinquish the earth but will be required to feel as if it were progressing towards the divine on a massive boat made of the earth and the heaven along with *Aditi*, the ultimate Creatrix. This resuscitation of the singular Vedic idea as embodied in a most condensed form in the imagery of seer *Plāta* could be made possible on the part of *Sri Aurobindo* by taking up the basic spirit behind *yajña* and reformulating it as *yoga* as well as by re-enlivening the *Vedic Ṛta* in the form of the *Supermind*.

If the imagery involved in the mantra seen by *Plāta* discussed above were to be combined with that of another Vedic seer namely *Dīrghatamas* as embodied in the mantra quoted immediately prior to that of *Plāta* at

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5 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम्।। *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā XL.1.*

6 स्वर्गकामो यजेत। *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa XVI.15.5.*

7 प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म।
एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापियन्ति।। *Muṇḍaka Up.I.2.7.*

footnote No.20, the significant point to emerge would be the possibility of characterising the cosmic boat as being sailed by eternal oars. Justification for the combination lies in use of adjectives to the boat by the respective seers so close as *nityāritrām* and *svaritrām*, meaning respectively as *'endowed with eternal oars'* and *`endowed with efficient oars'*. Obviously use of *nitya* in the place of *su* would have added extra syllable to *Plāta's* mantra which could by no means be desirable. In any case, however, there is so much closeness between the ideas embodied in the two mantras that *Plāta* could not have disliked his *Boat* being characterised as armed with eternal oars.

The picture of the universe emerging from *Plāta's* vision is that of the moving universe as distinct from the static one, since the spectacle of the boat is provided with constantly operative oars. The stuff against which as the background this movement is contemplated to place would have to be admitted as nothing less than the divine itself, since anything other than that is inadmissible. The boat itself, indeed, is a formulation out of the divine under the argis of the creative urge of the divine. However, though by virtue of having started its journey from the divine and marching constantly forward to reach its destination in the divine and thus being constantly mobile against the surface of the divine, the universe maintains constancy of things within itself as does the boat inside it notwithstanding its mobility against the surface of the water. This constancy of interrelationship of things inside the universal boat is borne out by the constancy and universality of natural laws in the universe. But once one takes the trouble of looking beyond the confinement of the boat as sailing against the surface of the water, the laws operating inside the boat cease to operate. Transcendence of the limitations obtaining inside the boat coincides with the arrival at the divine destination. These are the obvious implications of this significant vision of *Plāta* and form the cornerstone of the edifice of the characteristic Indian view of universe.

From this deliberation, it is evident that boat in the Veda has been used mostly in a highly symbolic way though beginning from bare similitude. From this analysis of the style of the Vedic seer with respect to boat itself, it is obvious that he has not to be taken at his face value in contexts where simply the boat is described in an apparently realistic form without any indication of similitude. One such significant account relates to *Vasiṣṭha* and *Varuṇa*. The account starts with *Vasiṣṭha's* soliloquy that when he and *Varuṇa* boarded the boat together and sailed in the middle of the sea, and made sojourns by means of smaller boats, they swung on the

tidy water as if they were sitting on a swing and that was splendid indeed.[8] In continuation of this soliloquy, it has been stated in the next mantra that when *Varuṇa* made *Vasiṣṭha* take his seat in the boat, he transformed the seer into the doer of noble deeds by means of his greatness with the consequence that great days dawned upon the seer followed by expansion of the heaven and shining of dawns.[9] That high deity like *Varuṇa* be making a human, like *Vasiṣṭha,* sit on a boat along with himself and be taking him in the middle of the sea and making him feel as if he were swinging and enjoying, is a proposition incredible in any actual sense. Deity is a cosmic agency and, if possessing any tangible form at all, must obviously belong to a plane of being entirely different from that of the human seer. As such, how can he sits together with a human in an actual boat and swing on the waves of the sea? Moreover, as is stated in the mantra, *Varuṇa* has taken the seer on the voyage on an auspicious day. Now, when the day was already there in progress, what was the relevance of the expansion of the heavens and emergence of the dawns? As a matter of fact, day always follows expansion of the heaven and emergence of the dawn. As against this obvious fact, as per the mantra, this natural order becomes topsy-turvy in course of the voyage. In view of these insurmountable difficulties, the account, therefore, would necessarily have to be taken as symbolic.

Let us now see if our interpretation of the boat referred to a little earlier can be of any help in regard to this account. While going to explore this possibility, it may be presumed that the boat in which *Varuṇa* and *Vasiṣṭha* were sailing and taking swings was something of the same sort as the cosmic one. A boat of such a cosmic dimension alone can accommodate *Varuṇa* who, as is evident from the etymology of his name, is an embodiment of expansion as such and accordingly is said to have his sovereignty on the sky on the one hand and on the sea on the other. His boat, on which he offers a seat to *Vasiṣṭha* must, therefore, understandably be the same cosmic boat as was recounted earlier as consisting of the earth, the heaven and *Aditi* all combined together. To get a seat in such a magnificent boat was not an easy task. It, as per the earlier account, could be available only to those who had accomplished splendid deeds and thus were worthy of being taken to the divine

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8 आ यद् रुहाव वरुणश्च नावं प्र यत् समुद्रमीरयाव मध्यम्।
अधि यदपां स्नुभिश्चराव प्र प्रेङ्खव ईङ्खयावहै शुभे कम्।। *RV. VII.88.3.*

9 वसिष्ठं ह वरुणो नाव्याधादृषिं चकार स्वपा महोभिः।
स्तोतारं विप्रः सुदिनत्वे अह्नां यान्नु द्यावस्ततनन् यादुषासः।। *Ibid., VII.88.4*

destination. In the mantra under consideration also *Vasistha* is said to have fulfilled this condition by virtue of being made the doer of noble acts by the greatness of *Varuṇa*. This only means cognisance of *Vasistha's* noble acts by the deity and not just declaring him baselessly as the doer of such acts, for seerhood in itself could not but be the consequence of noble acts accompanying the profound wisdom and mighty seeing power of the seer.

Sudinatve ahnām, on the other hand, is indicative of the auspiciousness of the occasion on which *Vasiṣṭha* got such elevation as to come to realise that he was seated on the cosmic boat. Accordingly, emergence of dawns would be symbolic of illuminations of still higher knowledge on the seer while expansion of the heavens would bear out elevation of him to higher planes of being in the voyage towards the divine destination. Swinging of the boat on the high tide of the sea, likewise, would symbolise the experience of blessedness on the part of the seer as well as expediting of his voyage towards the final destination. His sojourn by smaller boats at that stage of the journey, at the end, would naturally bring out complete autonomy of the self in relationship to the cosmos as a consequence of the closeness to the Divine he has achieved.

The significance of such an explanation lies, obviously, in taking due care of each and every point referred to in the mantra rather than in leaving all unexplained except anyone of them chosen just arbitrarily. In any case, any point in the Veda has to be understood in terms of cognate references in the Veda itself and by no means through import from outside and negligence or distortion of what is found incongruent with the presumption made on the basis of that imported stuff.

This interpretation gets further confirmation also from certain pertinent points made out in the sequel to this mantra. In the immediately following mantra there is a reference to the house of *Varuṇa* specified by three significant adjectives, *bṛhantam, mānam* and *sahasradvāram.*[10] *Bṛhantam* obviously is indicative of its colossal size. *Mānam*, on the other hand, signifies its immense creative potentiality while *sahasradvāram* symbolises complete autonomy of the state of being of *Varuṇa's* house. This is particularly so on account of door signifying the way out while thousand the infinity. Thus, *Varuṇa's* house is boundless besides being autonomous and possesses immense creative potentiality as well as power

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10 क्व त्यानि नौ सख्या बभूवुः सचावहे यदवृकं पुराचित्।
बृहन्तं मानं वरुण स्वधावः सहस्रद्वारं जगमा गृहं ते।। *Ibid. VII.88.5.*

of discretion and judgement as is indicated by its measurement. Its thousand doors are also symbolic of its capacity to entertain in it the entire cosmos which is proceeding towards it in the form of the boat sailing towards its divine destination. *Varuṇa's* house itself is that destination conceived in concrete form.

Secondly, in complete contrast to this colossal house of *Varuṇa*, there is a reference, just in the sequel to it, to another house made of clay and which the seer prays the deity to be merciful enough not to send him to.[11] Obviously, if the house of *Varuṇa* symbolises the state of redemption from bondage, complete autonomy and unbounded felicity, the house of clay shunned by the seer represents the physicality having its concentration in the physical body which, as per statements of Vedic seers themselves,[12] is made of clay and is so fragile as to render the immortal always prone to mortality. As against abhorrence to continue to dwell in such a house, intense desire expressed on the part of the seer to go to the house of *Varuṇa* is suggestive of his looking forward earnestly to his divine destiny which can be attained by sailing in *Varuṇa's* boat which understandably is the same as made out of joining together the earth, the heaven and *Aditi, Varuṇa's* mother herself. Being the origin of all, she cannot but be the end of all also. Can *Varuṇa's* house be any other than what *Aditi*, his mother, is taking the entire cosmos to by assuming the form of the colossal boat?

There are a few other accounts of boat also in the *Saṁhitā* which too seem to be symbolic rather than realistic. Most of them relate to *Aśvins* protecting *Bhujyu* by means of their boat. *Bhujyu* is the son of *Tugra* and is thrown into water by the latter himself in a way as if a dying person were to throw away his most precious possession, as the mantra tells us. Under what circumstances *Tugra* did this heinous act, is not clear from the references. This much, however, is certain that he was forced to do so most unwillingly due to pressure of the circumstances. The point where *Bhujyu* was dropped by his father is described as the mass of water, an abysmally deep sea shrouded in dense darkness. It is in such a precarious condition that the *Aśvins* came to his help and rescued him perfectly well. The means they used for rescuing him, was boat both in singular and plural. When spoken of in the singular, however, it at the

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11 मो षु वरुण मृन्मयं गृहं राजन्नहं गमम्।
मृळा सुक्षत्र मृळय। । *Ibid., VII.89.1.*

12 *Cf. F.N. 2 and 4.*

same time is said to have as many as one hundred oars attached to it.[13] Construction of boats having as large a number of oars as one hundred and sailing on deep sea is something spectacular for the Vedic people who otherwise have been misrepresented not to have seen the sea at all. The figure hundred, however, may be symbolic denoting much more than what literally it means. In that case, the possibility of it being symbolic gets very much enhanced. In other two references, the boat itself is stated to be in the plural. In one of them, it is said to be four in number while in the other one just the plural. Where they are mentioned as four in number, they are said to have had some sort of resemblance with the belly. May be, they were circular in shape and hence bore *Bhujyu* safely as the mother bears the child. They are also said to have taken *Bhujyu* to a safe place as per the desire of the *Aśvins*.[14] Where, on the other hand, they are indicated in plural only, they are said to have been automatic, capable of floating in the intermediate space and be unleaking. They are also said to have provided protection to *Bhujyu* in midst of the cloud.[15]

If we were to piece together all the details about boat or boats the *Aśvins* used in saving *Bhujyu*, it would come out as one operative in the intermediate space as well as on the sea, automatic, sailing just as per the desire of the divine as well as by means of one hundred or a still larger number of oars. These details are obviously not to be taken as realistic in their entirety and as such they provide us with sufficient ground for taking them as symbolic. But since we do not have any more details about them, we cannot be sure about their precise signification at least at this stage of our understanding of the account.

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13 अनारम्भणे तदवीरयेथामनास्थाने अग्रभणे समुद्रे।
यदश्विना ऊहथुर्भुज्युमस्तं शतारित्रां नावमातस्थिवांसम्।। *RV.I.116.5.*

14 अवविद्धं तौग्र्यमप्स्वन्तरनारम्भणे तमसि प्रविद्धम्।
चतस्रो नावो जठलस्य जुष्टा उदश्विभ्यामिषिताः पारयन्ति।। *Ibid., I.182.6.*

15 तुग्रो ह भुज्युमश्विनोदमेघे रयिं न कश्चिन्ममृवां अवाहाः।
तमूहथुर्नौभिरात्मन्वतीभिरन्तरिक्षप्रुद्भिरपोदकाभिः।। *Ibid., I.116.3.*

Symbolic Content of the Gambler's Hymn

Rgveda X.34 deals with the ordeals of a gambler. Its seer is *Kavaşa Ailūşa*. The final message of the hymn is that one should in no case indulge in gambling and should rather prefer tilling the field and subsisting on its economy, howsoever meagre it may be. This message could very well have been communicated in plain words. The seer, however, does not do so. Instead of communicating the message in plain words, he dramatises the situation in such a beautiful manner that his hymn has become one of the best literary pieces in the Vedic literature. So artistically perfect it is that it appears as a summary of the *Mahābhārata* or rather an ancient prototype of it. It is not surprising that *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa*, the author of the *Mahābhārata*, might have derived the basic idea of his great epic from this hymn, by virtue of having supposedly been the compiler of the Vedic *Saṁhitās*.

The remarkable appeal of the hymn lies in the dramatic way of communication of its message. As pointed out above, the seer does not communicate his message in plain words. He does not communicate it through the example of any other person either. He himself plays the role of the example and puts life in everything including the dices themselves to the extent of creating a situation of war taking place not only between the gamblers but also between the particular gambler on the one side and the mischievous dices on the other.

Dices those days were made of the seed of *Vibhīdaka*, a tree grown on hills, and used even today as one of the three ingredients of *triphalā*. At the very outset of the hymn, the seer observes that the extremely speedy seeds of the tree are exhilarating to him to the extent of creating madness in him by their fast movement on the ground. Their speed, he imagines, is owing to their circumstances of having been borne at the top of tall trees affected always by wind blowing fast. He compares their power of exhilaration with that generated by taking *Soma*.[1] Comparison of attraction towards the game of dice with the effect of *Soma* itself bears out the highly symbolic way of expression adopted by the seer.

The seer in the next mantra talks of the effect of gambling on his family life, particularly in his relationship with his wife. He observes that his wife

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1 प्रावेपा मा बृहतो मादयन्ति प्रवातेजा इरिणे वर्वृतानाः।
सोमस्येव मौजवतस्य भक्षो विभीदको जागृविर्मह्यमच्छान्।। *RV.X.34.1.*

did never trouble him anyway nor had she been angry with him on any account earlier. On the contrary, he confesses, she was extremely cordial to his friends as well as to himself. But things have turned completely other way round and all that is due only to his indulgence in gambling. Now his wife has been kept away from him.[2] As he states, his mother-in-law has begun to hate him and has kept her daughter away from him and in spite of all his pleas and requests for mercy, he is not getting any favour from anyone. So wretched he has become. He compares his hopeless condition with that of a highly priced horse getting old. Just as the old horse is not likely to get even bare grass for satisfying his hunger, even so the gambler is not able to get even the minimum of money for just keeping up his passion for gambling.[3] Comparison of his desperate condition with that of a highly priced but old horse, and of his provision for gambling with the food of the same horse testifies to the seer's capability of representing subtle ideas by gross images which is the secret of symbolic expression.

In the fifth mantra, he observes that when he resolves not to indulge in gambling any more, he suffers desertion from his friends. Moreover, when the dices being thrown on the ground produce the peculiar sound, he feels a challenge being thrown by them irresistible enough not to respond to like a lusty woman feeling so on the call of her paramour.[4] Attraction of the lusty woman towards her paramour is an experience entirely different from the passion for gambling and yet the seer makes use of it in view of closeness of the two experiences in regard to intensity of feeling involved in them. Moreover, to hear the call of challenge in the sound of the dice in itself bears out the highly symbolic nature of the account.

Up to this extent, it seems, the seer himself is the gambler having lost everything in the game including his wife and yet willing to continue to play the game at any cost. On the basis of this account, scholars have made the facile inference that the game of dice was so popular during the period of the Ṛgveda that seers even indulged in it to the extent of losing everything. They, however, have not taken the care of perusing the life of

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2 न मा मिमेथ न जिहीळ एषा शिवा सखिभ्य उत मह्यमासीत्।
अक्षस्याहमेकपरस्य हेतोरनुव्रतामप जायामरोधम्।। *Ibid.X.34.2.*

3 द्वेष्टि श्वशूरप जाया रुणद्धि न नाथितो विन्दते मर्डितारम्।
अश्वस्येव जरतो वस्न्यस्य नाहं विन्दामि कितवस्य भोगम्।। *Ibid., X.34.3.*

4 यदादीध्ये न दविषाण्येभिः परायद्भ्योऽवहीये सखिभ्यः।
न्युप्ताश्च बभ्रवो वाचमक्रत एमीदेषां निष्कृतं जारिणीव।। *Ibid., X.34.5.*

the seer as recounted in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* besides taking into consideration the other four hymns seen by this seer preceding it in the *Samhitā*.

Kavaṣa Ailūṣa, the *Brāhmaṇa* story tells us, was a learned and respectable Brāhmaṇa, so much so, of course, as to have deserved the invitation of a great king of the time for performing the *Soma* sacrifice along with some other priests. While making the offerings in the fire, the story continues, he faltered on a certain point. Consequently he was banished to a lonely place away from the bank of river *Sarasvatī* where the sacrifice was being performed. Being thus put in such a precarious condition, he started practising *tapas* more and more intensively. At last *Indra* got pleased with him and shed rain so profusely that the entire area, suffering otherwise from long draught, got so much inundated as to make *Sarasvatī* reach up to that place. The news of this extraordinary feat of *Kavaṣa Ailūṣa* reached the king. He felt extremely sorry for what had happened in the sacrifice and sent his special chariot for taking *Kavaṣa Ailūṣa* respectfully to his capital. Being taken to the capital so honourably, *Kavaṣa Ailūṣa* resumed the performance of the sacrifice auguring well to the king.[5] It is quite understandable that after attaining to this spiritual height through his rigorous *tapas*, he became a seer and saw the mantras of *Ṛgveda X.30 to 34*. The story gets some corroboration from the mantras seen by him also. The corroboration vindicates the veracity of the story.

In view of this background, the account of gambling given in the hymn does not seem likely to apply to the seer. There is no likelihood of the seer of the eminence of *Kavaṣa Ailūṣa* indulging in the act of gambling to the extent of losing his wife and the credence of his father, mother, and brother. His spiritual height is evident, apart from the story, in the mantras seen by him. For instance, in the just second hymn seen by him, he talks of the forest as also of the tree therein out of which the pair of the Heaven and the Earth has been carved out and as such is placed in perfect co-ordination to each other, is un-ageing, self-sufficient, and has been seeing the lustre of countless dawns continuously for ages.[6] Visualisation of the visible reality as a polarity of the not-self and the Self, and imaging it out as an inestimably vast structure lasting for aeons and

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5 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VIII.1.*

6 किं स्विद्वनं क उ स वृक्ष आस यतो द्यावापृथिवी निष्टतक्षुः।
संतस्थाने अजरे इतऊती अहानि पूर्वीरुषसो जरन्त।। *RV.X.31.7.*

made of a stuff in all its immensity like a structure made of wood drawn from a certain forest, besides thinking of this structure in all its homogeneity, automation and beauty are superb feats of intellection and aestheticism. The seer, however, does not stop with this much. In the very next mantra he envisions something most fundamental lacking in this structure notwithstanding its massivity, homogeneity and lastingness. It is the invisible agency working from behind it so as to make this structure possible and work so incredibly well. The agency, which he thinks of, is transcendent to both, the Heaven and the Earth, the Self and the not-self, the subject and the object. It is conceived as a bull carrying the Heaven and the Earth as a pair of bags hanging on the two flanks of him. This supra-cosmic Bull is characterised as *svadhāvān*, self-sufficient in himself. While moving majestically bearing the loads of the Heaven and the Earth on his back, he, in regard to his self-sufficiency, is compared by the seer with the sun being carried by his rays conceived as horses drawing the chariot of him. The perspiration coming out of his body in this exercise is considered as the delightful *Soma* being squeezed and purified in the sieve made of hide and wool. It is this *Soma* of perspiration generated by the trial and tribulation of the Bull, which is proving the stuff of delight sustaining the Becoming of the Being getting concretised in the form of the polarity of the Heaven and the Earth.[7]

Thinking of a seer of this spiritual height, over and above the intellectual acuteness and aesthetic comprehension revealed in the mantra preceding it, as necessarily to have been a gambler going to the extreme of destitution before seeing of the mantras forming the hymn is cognate to taking him to have necessarily been a carpenter designing wooden structures of colossal dimensions and indeed to have been a serf bearing loads on his shoulders or more appropriately a bull carrying the same loads on his back before seeing these two mantras. If he could think of the universe as a colossal wooden structure without any possibility of himself having been a carpenter, a Brāhmaṇa as he was, as also of the Supreme Being as a bearer of loads without himself having been a serf on the same account and not a bull at all, a human being as he was, it is not necessary for him at all to have himself been a practising gambler before going in for the composition of the mantras depicting the game of gambling and its consequences on the gambler. Seeing of the seer does not require him practically himself undergo the experience of the object of

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7 नैतावदेना परो अन्यदस्त्युक्षा स द्यावापृथिवी बिभर्ति।
त्वचं पवित्रं कृणुते स्वधावान् यदीं सूर्यं न हरितो वहन्ति।। *Ibid.,X.31.8.*

seeing. Where seeing presupposes physical participation of the seer in the act of seeing, cannot be the seeing of the seer but that of the ordinary man. The range of the seer's vision outstanding immeasurably the commonplace state of seeing revolts against the idea of the seer of the hymn having himself been a gambler, at least of the type as recounted in the hymn. If needed at all to explain his familiarity with the game and its evil consequences, it is quite possible that he in his early life before being invited to the sacrifice of the king as a priest had some sort of association with the game on a preliminary level and as a consequence of which he was admonished by the chief priest as a gambler besides a non-Brāhmaṇa, and the son of a *dāsī*.[8]

That the experiences of the gambler as recounted in the hymn are not necessarily related with the personal life of the seer himself, is evident from the remaining mantras of the hymn. In clear contrast to the four mantras discussed already and supposed ot bear the stamp of the seer's own participation in the game, the rest of the ten mantras present him in his true colour as a close but dispassionate observer of the phenomenon involving human suffering of the magnitude as displayed nowhere better than in the *Mahābhārata* through the life of the *Pāṇḍavas* and *King Nala*.

Accordingly, in the fourth mantra of the hymn, the seer observes how one who gets involved in the act of gambling loses his wife to be misused by others while his parents and brothers disown him completely and even ask people to arrest and take him away.[9] In this mantra the dice is described as a powerful horse which only figuratively may be said to be so. Thus the usage shows the tendency of the seer to put plain things in figurative garbs so as to be more effective in expression. The irresistible passion for gambling has been represented here concretely by the horse used as the animal of force.

In the seventh mantra, again, dices are described as a group of militant people wielding barbed goads, driving hooks, axes and fire for burning anyone whom they choose. They are also represented as playful children giving something for a moment and taking it back the next moment. Though obviously bitter in taste, they, in view of the allurement they create in the mind of the gambler by providing some chance of winning,

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8 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VIII.1.*

9 अन्ये जायां परि मृशन्त्यस्य यस्यागृधद्वेदने वाज्यक्षः।
पिता माता भ्रातर एनमाहुर्नैनं जानीमो नयता बद्धमेतम्।। *RV.X.34.4.*

are described as besmeared with honey.[10] Imaging the dices as militants on the one hand and as innocent children on the other is obviously a paradoxical way of expression used by the seer in one and the same breath in full consciousness of the paradox involved. Usages like this elsewhere, therefore, are not to be taken in the gross literal sense imputing ignorance on the seer himself, but as having been made consciously and symbolically for communicating something subtle and complicated. Man's natural fascination for dice and his high expectations from it besmear it with honey in the eye of the seer while the fickleness involved in the chances of winning in the game makes him transform it into an innocent child to part with something only to take it back the next moment.

The next mantra describes them as a group of fifty-three powerful personalities playing not as tools of anybody but independently amongst themselves, as if usual, the gamblers themselves as tools in their invisible hands. The *dharma* by which they are guided is said to be as constant as the rules of life and the world administered by god *Savitṛ*. They are supposed to remain unbending even in the face of mighty personages. Even the King is said to bow down before them.[11] Dices, as a matter of fact, are extremely insignificant in themselves, being petty products of a wild tree. As such, characterisation of them as upholders of *dharma* like *Savitṛ* and bender of even kings may at its best look as sarcastic. But that has not been the sole truth. One is not sure of the Vedic period where also the remark is most likely to have been true, but in the *Mahābhārata* it has proved true to the letter in case of the *Pāndavas* bending down before dictations of dices, howsoever petty otherwise, and retiring to the forest for as many as thirteen years unprotestingly leaving behind all their claim to the throne of a mighty empire. More or less the same happened in the case of *King Nala* who has been recounted in the *Mahābhārata* as a legendary figure and thus may be taken pretty well as belonging to the Vedic age. Such is the mighty perception of the seer in regard to the power of dice. In his view, dice has become archetypal symbol of evil playing almost the same role on the human level as *Vṛtra* is said to be playing on the divine in his opposition to *Indra* and the rest of the gods. *Vṛtra* substantially is nothing but a negative tool of constriction. In his effect he,

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10 अक्षास इदङ्कुशिनो नितोदिनो निकृत्वानस्तपनास्तापयिष्णवः।
कुमारदेष्णा जयतः पुनर्हणो मध्वा संपृक्ताः कितवस्य बर्हणा।। *Ibid.,X.34.7.*

11 त्रिपञ्चाशः क्रीळति व्रात एषां देव इव सविता सत्यधर्मा।
उग्रस्य चिन्मन्यवे ना नमन्ते राजा चिदेभ्यो नम इत् कृणोति।। *Ibid., X.34.8.*

however, proves so powerful as to keep such a mighty god as *Indra* all the time adversely engaged. Similar is the effect of the petty dice on those humans who happen to come under its spell. In the eye of the seer, therefore, no more have they remained the petty fruits of the *vibhīdaka* but have become seeds of evil of almost of the same magnitude as are seduction, ignorance, anger and intoxication.[12]

Affinity of dice with *Vṛtra* becomes still more evident in the next mantra. It has been stated in this mantra that being thrown down on the ground, dices jump upward and even being themselves handless, they overpower men with their hands intact. They are fireballs of the heaven having been thrown down on the earth. Really they are cold but in effect so fiery as to burn even the heart deep down in the midst of the body.[13] The language of paradox in which dices are enshrouded bears out their symbolic character here in this account. When thrown on the ground, they, being lifeless, should have remained there all still, but they take jump like living beings. They are handless, and are, therefore, expected to be helpless particularly in the act of fighting. But, contrary to it, they overpower the gambler himself who makes the throw by his hand. *Vṛtra* also in one of the mantras seen by *Gṛtsamada* has once been described as handless as also footless and as yet giving a close fight to *Indra* even though the latter commands the might of the three worlds.[14] It mainly suggests to the engaging power of the evil confronting the good. Just as *Vṛtra* sometimes puts even *Indra* in confusion by means of fog, storm and noise created by him, even so does the dice with the gambler with this difference, however, that while *Indra* in any case overpowers *Vṛtra* eventually, the gambler is brought to his complete ruination by the dice, the hidden message pointing to the basic difference between the human and the divine in this way. The human and the divine both fight against evil. But, while the divine, in spite of incidental pitfalls, comes always victorious eventually, the human is very much likely to be drawn in the vortex of evil itself and serve helplessly as tools in the actualisation of the latter's designs. The game of dice is a glaring example of this state of things. It originally is taken up as a means of sheer amusement but by and by the gambler gets

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12 न स्वो दक्षो॑ वरुण ध्रुतिः॒ सा सु॒रा॑ म॒न्युर्वि॒भीद॑को॒ अचि॑त्तिः।
अस्ति॒ ज्याया॒न् कनी॑यस उपा॒रे स्वप्नेश्च॒नेद॑नृ॒तस्य॑ प्रयो॒ता।। *Ibid., VII.86.6.*

13 नी॒चा व॑र्तन्त उ॒परि॑ स्फुरन्त्यहस्तासो॒ हस्त॑वन्तं सहन्ते।
दि॒व्या अङ्गा॑रा॒ इरि॑णे॒ न्यु॑प्ताः शी॒ताः सन्तो॒ हृद॑यं॒ निर्द॑हन्ति।। *Ibid.X.34.9.*

14 अ॒पाद॑हस्तो अपृतन्यदिन्द्र॒मास्य॒ वज्र॒मधि॒ सानौ॑ जघान। *Ibid., I.32.7.*

so much possessed by it as to become a tool of its evil designs against himself. This is evident in its becoming autonomous and operating against his interests once it gets out of his hand. When thrown below, it rises upward; when clasped as something soothing to touch, it turns so hot as to burn even the heart of the gambler.

The next mantra is a plain description of the wretched state of the gambler's life. It recounts how the wife of the gambler undergoes suffering due to having been deserted by her husband while his mother suffers the anguish caused by the waywardness of her son. The gambler, on the other hand, being afraid of the notice of his creditors and still in dire necessity of more money for continuing to remain in the game, approaches someone only at night.[15] The first hemistich of the next mantra also is just continuance of the same account in the same plain way. It mentions how the gambler repents on the state of things he has landed himself in particularly when he observes others of his own status having maintained their households nicely. In the second hemistich, however, the account returns from plain speaking to symbolism. It states how the gambler yokes to his chariot brown ones in the forenoon and drops himself eventually in the close proximity of fire.[16] This figurative account may very well be mistaken for a realistic one amounting to stating that the gambler yokes brown horses to his chariot in the morning and comes to a stop in the evening and sits close to fire as a remedy of the cold weather.

This interpretation does not conform to the seriousness of purpose shown by the hymn throughout from the beginning to the end. When the gambler has lost almost everything he had had, how can he afford to travel by a chariot particularly by one having horses yoked to it in the plural, while even gods normally have only two horses or mares to draw their vehicles. Moreover what purpose is served by the account of this travel of the gambler in the context of the basic theme of the hymn, is not clear from this interpretation.

On the other hand, if we take things here on symbolic lines, we find everything conforming to the context. Here the brown horses yoked to the chariot of the gambler are not horses at all, nor is the chariot the chariot

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15 जाया तप्यते कितवस्य हीना माता पुत्रस्य चरतः क्व स्वित्।
ऋणावा बिभ्युद्धनमिच्छमानोऽन्येषामस्तमुप नक्तमेति।। *Ibid.,X.34.10.*

16 स्त्रियं दृष्ट्वाय कितवं ततापान्येषां जायां सुकृतं च योनिम्।
पूर्वाह्णे अश्वान् युयुजे हि बभ्रून् त्सो अग्नेरन्ते वृषलः पपाद।। *Ibid.,X.34.11.*

and much less, therefore, the gambler the charioteer. In this hymn itself the word *babhravah* has already been used as an adjective to the dices in the expression, *nyuptāśca babhravah*, without mentioning *aksah* which it qualifies. Now when in its second occurrence *babhravah* has come to qualify *aśvan*, the latter may very well be taken as symbolic of the *akşah*. Thus when the horses become symbolic of the dices, the chariot naturally becomes symbolic of gambling allowing the charioteer to be decoded in the form of the gambler. The forenoon, *purvahna*, becomes symbolic of the youth when the charioteer started his indulgence in the game. The proximity of fire which he is said to have attained to ultimately through this journey in the form of gambling is the anxiety of the sense of loss which he has come to suffer at the end of the travel when he has come to complete destitution, with no more chance of gambling except for repenting over it.

The next mantra introduces another set of symbolism taken from the spectacle of fighting and surrender. Here the dices which originally were taken as a petty means of amusement have come to be viewed as a large army well organised under the leadership of the most powerful one amongst them. After this successful operation of his force, the leader comes to be enthroned as king. The gambler, on the other hand, feels himself reduced to the position of the captive of the war. Before him the gambler now surrenders himself completely disarmed and shorn of the will to fight. Facing to the east and taking the sun as the symbol of *Ṛta*, he swears by him not to fight any more with dices.[17]

In the last mantra of the hymn, the same dices are addressed again as brown ones, but in a different capacity. They are conceived as hunters catching the prey by means of nets. Conceiving of them as such, the seer prays to them to become friendly with him ceasing to be terrific. He further requests them to redirect their anger towards the enemies so that they rather than he be caught in their trap.[18] In this mantra, obviously, the element of deception inherent in this game has been symbolised by the trap of the hunter lying await in the path of the prey as also having within it something to the liking of the latter. The winning of a certain chance in the game is represented concretely by that object of the liking of

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17 यो वः सेनानीर्महतो गणस्य राजा व्रातस्य महतो बभूव।
तस्मै कृणोमि न धना रुणध्मि दशाहं प्राचीस्तदृतं वदामि।। *Ibid., X.34.12.*

18 मित्रं कृणुध्वं खलु मृळता नो मा नो घोरेण चरताभि धृष्णु।
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18 मित्रं कृणुध्वं खलु मृळता नो मा नो घोरेण चरताभि धृष्णु।
नि वो मन्युर्विशतामरातिरन्यो बभ्रूणां प्रसितौ न्वस्तु।। *Ibid., X.34.14.*

the prey. That is the thing most deceptive in the game. The hope for getting such a chance materialised keeps the gambler sustained in the game which ultimately leads to his destitution in the same way as attraction towards the bet kept inside the trap results in the captivity of the prey. Application of this deceptive way to captivate the innocent is obviously unjustified by any standard of morality. Only the crooked deserves to be meted out the deceptive treatment of the sort. This is what the seer means to make out through his prayer to the king of the dices to make the object of his anger only his enemy who by nature is ignoble.

The final message of the hymn is communicated through the penultimate mantra. Here the seer advises mankind universally and for ever not to gamble at all but on the contrary to take up to any productive means for the sustenance of life. Such a means, he suggests, may not be very lucrative and hence unattractive at the face. Such is cultivation, for instance. It may be slow, but certainly it is steady. It does not involve any deception in it. Through it one wishes to get only what is due to him as a result of the labour he has put in and the investment he has actually made. There is no desire at all in the cultivator to invest one rupee and get one hundred just at one stroke, as is the case with gambling. If one intends to thrive on gambling, that, to be sure, is at the cost of others, which ought not be the noble way of life. The trade pursued by the noble is always guided by the law of causation. Any trade which seeks to thrive on chance conversion to oneself what belongs to others, is not only morally unjustified but also results in segregating the tissues of life. For instance, while the gambler's wife happens to be detained at his in-laws' house, his parents and brothers ask for his ouster from his own house, and thus he is made to suffer utter destitution, the cultivator is privileged to remain in his household uninterruptedly amidst his cows symbolising the means of sustenance and wife representing the beatitude and fulfilment of life.

Gambling and cultivation, indeed, are two extreme ways of earning one's livelihood. The latter is the fairest while the former is the foulest. Gambling may look lucrative and as an easy way out but it is not only morally unjustified and full of risks leading to utter destitution but is also disruptive of the fabric of life. The converse of it is cultivation. Besides being morally justified, it is the best preservative of the fabric of life. Life of the cultivator constantly in the midst of cows, wife and his fields is symbolic of the ideal holistic mode of living in contrast to the gambler's symbolising the process of disruption of the same to the extreme. This

ideal state of things in regard to life has been suggested here symbolically through the images of the cultivator living in the midst of his cow, wife and fields all together synthetically.

This ideal way of living is said to be suggested to the seer by god *Savitṛ* himself who is the basic force of impulsion behind the entire existence, including the phenomenon of life.[19] As such, it is expected to remain constant. As a matter of fact, it has remained so until now indisputably to the discerning mind. Any dispute about it only exposes the mind's propensity for gamble.

In one of his mantras seen elsewhere, *Kavaşa Ailūşa* has observed that a person unacquainted with a certain area takes the advice of one who is acquainted with it and as a consequence he is able to walk through it. He characterises this mode of transmission of knowledge as *anuśāsana*. He further observes that following this mode of learning people are able to measure the velocity of even extremely fast streams of water.[20] In this statement of the seer, we see how he is proceeding from the simple to the complex. Asking someone knowledgeable of a certain path leading to a certain point and, having been thus informed, reaching that point, is the simplest form of learning. But to measure the velocity of a fast moving stream is a difficult proposition. As everything is considered mobile in the Veda, including the universe itself, this proposition may extend up to the dynamics of the latter, including that of its planets, stars, galaxies and clusters. In this process of learning we see how the latter is described illustratively by asking about the way on the simpler static side and measuring the velocity of the stream of water on the complex side covering the entire dynamics. These illustrations may be treated as symbolic of the actual process of learning extending from simple problems to most complex ones. Similar is the position of the account of the gambler's experience given by the same seer in the hymn concerned. It is simply a façade, a symbol of things much more serious than just gambling and losing everything. It is suggestive of the proper course of life one has to take to by discerning it from the improper one. The crux of this course is following the law of labour and commensurate return and abandoning the course of profiting by chance involving deception.

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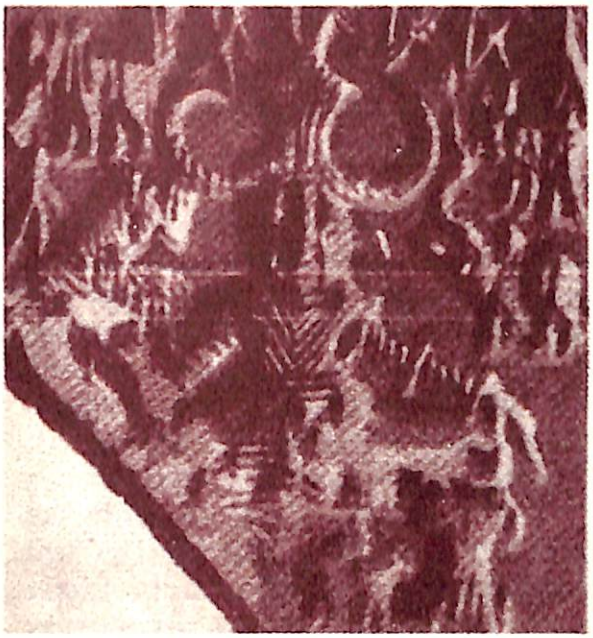
19 अक्षैर्मा दीव्यः कृषिमित् कृषस्व वित्ते रमस्व बहु मन्यमानः।
तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जाया तन्मे वि चष्टे सवितायमर्यः।। *Ibid.,X.34.13.*

20 अक्षेत्रवित् क्षेत्रविदं ह्यप्राट् स प्रैति क्षेत्रविदानुशिष्टः।
एतद्वै भद्रमनुशासनस्योत श्रुतिं विन्दत्यञ्जसीनाम्।। *Ibid.,X.32.7.*



Carving of the Pasupati Seal of Mohenjo-Daro

Amongst the Indus seals, probably the most important is one known as the *Paśupati Seal.* It has evoked great interest since it has been unearthed. It has depicted on it a peculiar human figure wearing a horned head-dress, sitting in *sidhasana*, legs placed cross-wise and arms resting on knees, eyes turned towards the tip of the nose; three-faced, wearing a meagre loin-cloth with its ends projected slightly from the waist and three big and eight small bangles in each of the arms and having a triangular torque hanging over the chest. The figure is rugged in look and meditative, serene and calm in posture. It is surrounded by a number of animal-figures depicted on the two sides and below the seat. On its right side at the top is an elephant moving outside with his trunk extending ahead. Below the elephant is a tiger, stripped, with claws opened out, and growling at the human figure. On the left side at the top is a rhinoceros facing the human figure. It too is in a moving posture with all its four legs visible distinctly. Below the same is another animal looking partly as bull and partly as buffalo. Its horns are almost of the same shape as the head-dress of the human figure, the latter, however, having some vegetation growing in between the horns. Below his seat, which is a little raised from the ground, there is a pair of antelopes with their horns sweeping back and faces raised in awe towards him.

Irrespective of the vast difference of size in the animals actually, the four bigger animals are depicted more or less as of equal size, with the tiger as a little bigger than the elephant, the buffalo as a little bigger than the rhinoceros, and the human figure matching all of them put together. This departure from the actuality is suggestive of the highly idealised nature of the figures. In this ideal scheme of things, the human figure is intended to be most important. This is indicated by his central position as well as the massive size. The four animals, on the other hand, are treated as of equal importance amongst themselves and as subordinate to the human figure. The focal point of the whole depiction is the face of the human figure with its eyes looking round, the eye-brows considerably raised and the face appearing bold and indignant, bearing with perfect equipoise the growling of the tiger as well as the expectant look of the buffalo.

Sir John Marshal, the excavator of the Indus Valley site, named the human figure of the seal as *Paśupati*, the Lord of animals. He did so rightly as the figure bears overwhelmingly the characteristic features of the *Śaivaite* deity. The three-edged head-dress was reminiscent of the trident of *Śiva*; his *yogic* posture went well with the ascetic character of

the deity while the animals around him could not but be taken as a sure proof of his being the Lord of animals which *Śiva* is believed to be in almost all his forms. But the problem rested with the how of such a form of *Śiva* having been conceived as early as the middle of the third millennium B.C. by which epoch the Aryans were not supposed to have touched the Indian soil. As an easy way out of this difficulty, *Sir John Marshal* declared his *Paśupati* as a *proto-Śiva* figurine which having got mixed up with the Vedic *Rudra* resulted, in course of time, in the emergence of the real *Śiva* of the post-Vedic era. Thus, he took his *Paśupati* as a wholly non-Aryan phenomenon having little to do with the Vedas and the Vedic *Rudra* at that stage.

Contrary to this view, however, there is a set of evidence suggesting inherence of the motif of the *Paśupati Seal* in considerable detail in the *Ṛgveda* itself. The evidence is offered by *Ṛgveda I.64*, a hymn addressed to *Maruts*. The *Maruts* are viewed here particularly in relationship to *Rudra*. This is borne out by their characterisation as the `*son of Rudra*', `*young Rudras* and `*mortals of Rudra*'.[1] These expressions show, how, though quite important in themselves, the *Maruts* are just the sons, younger representatives and relatively mortal epiphanies of *Rudra*. They are his progeny and dependants. As such, they can easily be depicted as a number of children moving or playing around the father sitting in constancy, conscious of their well being and ready to intervene in their strifes and fightings. In view of this relationship obtaining between *Rudra* and the *Maruts*, any artist could easily have drawn the former in a human form and the latter as his children surrounding him in some or the other posture but in any case much smaller in size and after all mobile. In relationship to them, *Rudra* could be represented by a human figure seated in a posture of wisdom, gracefulness, bounty and might,[2] adorned in golden light,[3] benign towards animals, kine and children,[4] having braided hair,[5] strong limbs, bedecked with golden ornaments and looking

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1 रु॒दस्य सूनुम्। *RV.I.64.12.* युवानो रु॒दाः। *Ibid.I.64.3.*

2 क॒दु॒दाय प्रचेतसे मीळ्हुष्टमाय तव्यसे।
वोचेम शंतमं हृदे।। *Ibid.,I.43.1.*

3 यः शु॒क इव सूर्यो हिरण्यमिव रोचते।
श्रेष्ठो देवानां वसुः।। *Ibid,I.43.5.*

4 यथा नो अदितिः करत् पश्वे नृभ्यो यथा गवे।
यथा तोकाय रु॒द्रियम्।। *Ibid.,I.43.2.*

5 इमा रु॒दाय तवसे कपर्दिने। *Ibid.,I.114.1.*

aggressively mighty.[6]

More or less this is how *Paśupati* of the *Mohenjo-Daro* seal has been depicted. He is as tall and massive as all the animals surrounding him put together. Two antelopes are carved under the pedestal he is seated on. The pedestal is raised from the ground understandably to suggest to his divinity. He is towering over the elephant and the rhinoceros even. Through his head-dress he appears to shoot up in the boundless space. This is quite in accordance with the *Rgvedic* account of *Rudra* as `the boar of heaven, bright in colour and having braided hair.[7]

Incidentally if the hair-lock is not visible in this seal, that is due to the head-dress. Otherwise its being there is very much vindicated by another seal in which the same figure is seated with a thick lock of hair hanging off the left shoulder. This is also the case with a third seal in which the same figure is again depicted as standing in-between two branches of a *peepal* tree, and having a braid of hair hanging off the left shoulder.

Another significant point on which there is peculiar akinness between the *Mohenjo-Daro Paśupati* and the *Rgvedic Rudra* is the abundance of ornaments which both are made to put on. As regards *Paśupati*, his both arms are laden with bangles from wrists to shoulders. His chest also has a triangular torque hanging over it. Parallel to it, in the *Ṛgveda*, we get the account how *Rudra* has adorned himself with pieces of gold.[8]

The third important feature of the figure of *Paśupati* is the modelling of the face. It is peculiarly bull-like. In fact, along with the head-dress consisting of a pair of stout horns with a decorative piece in-between the two, his face seems to have been intended to bear semblance to a bull's. Of course, there is no dearth of human images in *Mohenjo-Daro* or *Harappa*. None of these images, however, has been adorned with a head-dress of horns nor is anyone of them made bull-faced. If there is any exception to it, that is the image of *Paśupati* in all its versions whether squatting on the ground or standing in the midst of a pair of branches of a *peepal* tree. No doubt, there is variation in these images in so far as the

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6 स्थिरेभिरंगैः पुरुरुप उग्रो बभ्रुः शु॰केभिः पिपिशे हिरण्यैः।
ईशानादस्य भुवनस्य भूरेर्न वा उ योषद् रु॰दादसुर्यम्।। *Ibid., II.33.9.*

7 दिवो वराहमरुषं कपर्दिनं त्वेषं रूपं नमसा नि ह्वयामहे।
हस्ते बिभ्रद् भेषजा वार्याणि शर्म च्छर्दिरस्मभ्या यंसत्।। *Ibid.,I.114.5.*

8 *See Footnote 6 supra.*

braid of hair is concerned. For, out of the four images of *Paśupati* of this variety, two have distinct braids and two are bereft of it. But in regard to the head-dress of horns, there is perfect uniformity among them. Incidentally, there is a fifth image also in which a naked human figure is moving with bow in one hand and arrow in the other. This figure is made to put on a mask of animal head along with a pair of horns and the characteristic face. This mask also has the probability of being a representation of the bull's face. Alternatively, however, it may be taken to represent either a deer or dog. This figure also is taken as a variant form of *Paśupati*. Being admitted as bull-faced, it too confirms *Paśupati's* close association with bull.

This association of *Paśupati* with bull is a prelude to the later conception of *Śiva* having bull as his ride. This development lies simply in separating the bull-feature of *Paśupati* from him and making it fall apart as his ride. But, interestingly enough, what appears as a ride in the later conception of the deity, and as a mask in *Mohenjo-Daro*, is found as an inherent attribute of him in the Veda. For, in a number of *Rgvedic* mantras, he has been addressed as *Vṛṣabha*, bull, sometimes simply as `*bull*' and at other as `*brown bull*'.[9] Thus there seems to be a developmental process involved in the association of *Śiva* with bull. What was sheer adjectival at the early stage, came to assume the form of a separate entity at the post-Vedic stage. The Indus civilisation seems, therefore, to occupy a position intermediate to these inasmuch as here the bull is associated with *Paśupati* neither as an adjective nor as an independent being but as his mask.

In view of the above fact, it was but natural that while being depicted as *Paśupati*, the deity was conceived as bull-faced. As such, the animals depicted on the seal could have been shown either as calves or as children depending on whether the deity was conceived as a human being or as a bull. If he was taken as a human being, the animals ought to have been shown as children playing around him. On the other hand, if he was treated as a bull, his issues should have been sheer calves. But, as we have noted in the beginning, neither of these two alternatives has been followed in the portrayal on the seal. The animals around *Paśupati* are neither children nor calves. They are buffalo, rhinoceros, tiger, elephant and antelopes. How could it be so?

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9 मा त्वा रु॒द चु॒क्रुधामा नमोभिर्मा दुष्टुती वृषभ मा सहूती। *Ibid.,II.33.4.*
उन्मा ममन्द वृषभो मरुत्वान्। *Ibid.,II.33.6.*
अपभर्ता रपसो दैव्यस्याभी नु मा वृषभ चक्षमीथाः। *Ibid.,II.33.7.*

The problem gets very well explained if we look into the manner in which *Maruts*, the sons of *Rudra,* have been described in the hymn under consideration. After being proposed for description by *Nodhas*, the seer, they have at the outset been addressed as bulls, *uksanah*, and men of *Rudra*, *rudrasya maryāh.* This was perfectly in accordance with the possibilities envisaged right now in view of *Rudra's* figuring out sometimes as a bull besides his regular human form. In this capacity they are said to have been born of the heaven and to be lofty, taintless and mighty. They are pure, purifying and mighty as the sun and at the same time ferocious in look.[10] They are young *Rudras*, un-ageing, demon-slayers and irresistibly expanding like mountains. By their might they are capable of making tremble even well settled entities of the heaven and the earth.[11] Possibly bull-like or human in form, these issues of *Rudra* are represented here by a variety of animals introduced by way of simile. The animals brought in here in this way are buffalo (*mahisa*), elephant (*hasti*), lion (*simha*), *piśa*, spotted deer (*pṛṣatī ṛṣṭi*) and serpent (*ahi*).[12]

As regards the buffalo, elephant, lion and deer, obviously there is perfect agreement between the *Rgvedic* account and the Indus depiction. If there remains anything of doubtful identity, that is the Rgvedic *piśa. Sāyaṇa*takes it in the sense of a type of deer called *ruru.* He considers the cognate word *supiśah* occurring in the same mantra to mean beautiful. Obviously, he comes to this meaning by deriving the word *piśa* from *pis*, to adorn. But this derivative meaning is not decisive. Many an animal can come under the purview of this sense. Indeed, the *Vaidika Padānukrama Kośa* indicates to the possibility of taking this word in the sense of elephant and bull as well. This is enough to suggest the ambiguity of the meaning of the word since long. In fact, the ambiguity is due to the absence of this word in this form in the whole of the Sanskrit literature except here and in a slightly variant form in *Ṛgveda VII.18.2.* As a part in *piśanga* and *piśangaka*, however, it occurs frequently in the Vedic as well

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10 ते जज्ञिरे दिव ऋष्वास उक्षणो रु॒दस्य मर्या असुरा अरेपसः।
पावकासः शुचयः सूर्या इव सत्वानो न ॒दम्सिनो न घोरवर्पसः।। *Ibid.,I.64.2.*

11 युवानो रु॒दा अजरा अभोग्घनो ववक्षुरध्रिगावः पर्वता इव।।
दृळ्हा चिद् भुवनानि पार्थिवा प्र च्यावयन्ति दिव्यानि मज्मना।। *Ibid.,I.64.3.*

12 महिषासो मायिनश्चित्रभानवो गिरयो न स्वतवसो रघुष्यदः।
मृगा इव हस्तिनः खादथा वना यदारुणीषु तविषीरयुग्ध्वम्।।
सिंहा इव नानदति प्रचेतसः पिशा इव सुपिशो विश्ववेदसः।
क्षपो जिन्वन्तः पृषतीभिर्ऋष्टिभिः समित् सबाधः शवसाहिमन्यवः।। *Ibid.,I.64.7-8.*

as post-Vedic literature. In the *Ṛgveda* itself it occurs at least a dozen times. Here it has been used in the sense of yellowish and golden as distinct from the reddish. This latter meaning is particularly evident in *Ṛgveda V.57.4*, where *piśangāśvāh* have been recounted as distinct from *arunāśvāh*. Thus, it is obvious that the animal called *pisa* must be yellowish in colour as a whole or at least pre-eminently. Such an animal can be the pig. Here it is interesting to point out that the *Oxford English Dictionary* has noted *picga* as the old English form of pig. About *picga*, it observes that its etymology is obscure and the origin is unknown. In view of the rarity of the Sanskrit word *piśa* and the almost total loss of its meaning at an early stage here in India, the puzzle of the lexicographer is quite understandable. Otherwise phonetically *picga* seems to be just a variant of *piśa*. Needless to point out that *C and S* are one and the same sound getting differentiated in the *Centum* and *Satem* groups of Indo-European languages respectively. In view of this as well as the akinness of colour as pointed out above, we can justifiably take the Rgvedic *piśa* to mean pig. And if we view rhinoceros in the *Paśupati* seal in the light of the above fact, we shall possibly not be very much unjustified in taking it as a representation of what in the *Ṛgveda* is intended by the word *piśa*, for, in the least, both the pig and the rhinoceros are very much similar in look. To take it other way round, in view of its closeness to the family of pigs, the rhinoceros has a strong case for being signified by the word *piśa*. Moreover, *Rudra-Śiva* has closely been associated with rhinoceros itself as well as with boar. While in the *Ṛgveda*, as pointed out earlier, he is described as the heavenly boar, *divo varāha*, in the *Mahabharata* once he is characterised as *gandalin*, the Lord of rhinoceros.[13]

Thus, the above facts are sufficient to bear out perfect correspondence between the Rgvedic account and the *Mohenjo-Daro* seal in regard to the animals brought in by way of simile in the *Ṛgveda* and as the companions of *Paśupati* in the seal. However, not only in kind but action also the Rgvedic animals mentioned above tally very well with those cast on the seal. In the Rgvedic account the buffalo is described as miraculously mighty, bright in colour, strong as the mountain and gliding swiftly. So is the case with the buffalo of the seal. Along with its stoutness, it is depicted in a swiftly moving posture. Similarly, the Rgvedic elephant is characterised as wild and busy in eating up forests. The elephant of the seal also has turned his face outward stretching his trunk considerably ahead with its tip turned to some extent. As regards the tiger there is

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13 *Mahabharata XIII.17.91.*

perfect unanimity of action in the text and the seal. In the text it is described as roaring loudly. In the seal also it is depicted as growling at *Paśupati*. The rhinoceros-boar is simply showing the bearing of its form almost equally at both the places.

While the four major animals mentioned above are introduced in the hymn as similes to *Maruts*, the antelopes are brought in as their rides by virtue of being yoked to their chariot. Interestingly enough, this distinction in the respective status of the two classes of animals is maintained in the seal also. Here while those brought in by way of simile to *Maruts* are depicted as moving on the two sides of *Paśupati*, the pair of dear is placed under his seat with their legs put at considerable distance from one another, heads raised, faces turned half backward and horns coming close to each other's thus suggesting cumulatively a state of movement in diverse directions. It is as if they are trying to drag the seat of the deity in opposite directions but failing to do so on account of his eternal constancy, they are looking behind in utter dismay. This motif is akin to the tiger's which, though trying utmost to frighten him, fails completely to disturb his peace.

The skin-designs of the antelopes in the text and the seal also bear considerable resemblance with each other. The antelopes in the text are characterised as spotted, *pṛṣatīh*. In the seal also we find rings of colour around the neck of them suggesting that they are spotted. If any reference to the use of spotted deer as a ride is required, we have the same in *Ṛgveda V.57.3*, where *Maruts*, the sons of *Pṛṣṇi*, are said to run over mountains and forests and shake the heaven and the earth riding on their chariot drawn by spotted deer. *Rudra*, however, is different from the *Maruts* in this regard. As against his sons, never does he ride on a chariot except at one place in the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā (XVI.26)* where also, as is evident from the use of his name in the plural, it is more probably *Maruts* who are meant rather than *Rudra* himself. On account of this theological position held in the Veda perhaps, the pair of antelopes is placed below his seat just in a state of suspended animation.

One pertinent point, which still remains to be brought to the focus of attention, is the personality of *Rudra* in the *Ṛgveda*, and the extent of its correspondence with the *Paśupati* of the seal. In this connection it is to be kept in mind that a special feature of *Paśupati*, if not appearing clearly in the seal under discussion yet manifest in other three seals depicting him, is his braid of hair hanging off his left shoulder. In the Indus seals,

amongst males, the braid of hair is peculiar to him, though amongst females it is quite common. Almost the same is the case with the *Ṛgveda*. As regard the females, a young lady is said to have as many as four locks of hair in this *Samhitā*.[14] But amongst males, it is peculiarly *Rudra*, besides *Pūṣan*, who has been referred to as *Kapardin*. In *Ṛgveda I.114.1*, along with the use of the adjective *Kapardin* for him, he is prayed to be peace-giving to human beings and animals and to bring prosperity and health to the village.[15] In the fifth mantra of the same hymn, he is given the same adjective again along with characterisation as the shining boar of heaven having choicest herbs in his hand and is prayed to bring peace and protection to people.[16] These details are sufficient to show how *Rudra* in the *Ṛgveda* keeps a long braid of hair, is peace-giving to animals as well as to men, cures diseases by means of herbs and has got a bright, powerful and shining personality. That the braid of hair is associated specially with spiritual *sādhanā* and that *Rudra* is a deity characteristically connected with such practices, is evident from *Ṛgveda X.136*, in which *munis* are said to keep long hair, put on yellow garment, keep mute, have access to spiritual knowledge and delight, travel in air and drink poison in the company of *Rudra*.[17]

If *Rudra* of the above description happens to be conceived by the ceramic artist in the *Mohenjo-Daro* seal as a *yogin* sitting calm and quite in the midst of ferocious animals, self-contented and benign and posing in *siddhāsana* with his gracious palms resting on his knees, naked but bedecked with ornaments made of gold, keeping a braid of hair hidden perhaps under the head-dress, there does not seem to be any improbability in it. On the contrary, such a conception and the subsequent depiction seem to be a natural consequence of what is said about the deity in the *Ṛgveda*.

In the *Yajurveda*, however, the *yogic* character of *Rudra* is more pronounced. Besides being addressed several times as *kapardin*, he is also conceived as dressed in skin which too is a special feature of *yogins*. But from our viewpoint at the moment, still more important are certain

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14 चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः सुपेशा घृतप्रतीका वयुनानि वस्ते। *Ibid.X.114.3.*

15 इमा रु॒दाय तवसे कपर्दिने क्षयद्वीराय प्र भरामहे मतीः।
यथा शमसद् द्विपदे चतुष्पदे विश्वं पुष्टं ग्रामे अस्मिन्ननातुरम्।। *Ibid.,I.114.1.*

16 दिवो वराहमरुषं कपर्दिनं त्वेषं रूपं नमसा नि ह्वयामहे।
हस्ते बिभ्रद् भेषजा वार्याणि शर्म वर्म च्छर्दिरस्मभ्यं यंसत्।। *Ibid.,I.114.5.*

17 केशी विषस्य पात्रेण य॒दुदेणापिबत् सह।। *Ibid.,X.136.7.*

other accounts of him in this *Samhitā*. In the first place, *Rudra* is described here as having put on a head-dress, *usnisin*. This description goes well not only with the seal under discussion but also with other three seals in which the same person recurs in different circumstances. It is particularly important to note that the same head-dress occurs not only in the three seals depicting the deity in an identical way in *siddhāsana* but in the fourth one also where he is standing between two branches of a *peepal* tree. Moreover, if the seals in *siddhāsana* depict the deity as a perfect *yogin*, that in the standing pose brings out a meeting-ground between the two apparently conflicting facets of *Rudra's* personality, the terrific and the benign, as, of course, described in the *Samhitās*. Just as the Rgvedic mantras under discussion form the motif of the famous *Paśupati* seal, even so there is a mantra in the *Yajurveda* which seems to have provided the basic idea of this fourth seal. In this mantra, *Rudra* is prayed to become most generous and auspicious by placing his weapon on the highest tree and turning back in a skin-dress.[18] Interestingly enough, in *Mohenjo-Daro* also while on the one hand we have three seals depicting the deity in *siddhāsana*, there is, on the other, a fourth one bringing out the same deity with bow and arrow in his hands and almost naked throughout the whole body or putting on some skin-dress. This last figure corresponds to the Vedic *Rudra* having bow and arrow in his hands. The seal depicting him as standing between branches of a tree and as completely disarmed has correspondence with the Vedic idea of *Rudra* having placed his weapon on the highest tree while the remaining three seals correspond to that form of *Rudra* which has become *Śiva* and *Paśupati*. It is also noteworthy that the deity standing between branches of the tree is being prayed to by a devotee sitting in a devout pose nearby with a goat standing behind him. At the bottom of the seal are seven human figures standing in a pose akin to the deity's. What these seven figures represent, is difficult to explain but one thing is certain that this motif as a whole corresponds to the position of the *Yajurveda* in which obeisance is made to *Rudra* by associating him with trees, herbs and animals.[19]

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18 मीदुष्टम शिवतम शिवो नः सुमना भव।
परमे वृक्ष आयुधं निधाय कृत्तिं वसान आ चर पिनाकं बिभ्रदा गहि।। *Yajurveda XVI.51.*

19 नमो रोहिताय स्थपतये वृक्षाणां पतये नमः।
नमो भुवन्तये वारिवस्कृतायौषधीनां पतये नमो।। *Ibid. XVI.19*
पशूनां पतये नमः। *Ibid.,XVI.17.*

As regards the motif of the *peepal* tree in the seal, it has a special bearing on the Vedic *Rudra*. If *Paśupati* is standing completely disarmed between branches of the *peepal* tree and as attended to by the human devotee, the devout animal and the seven human figures as depicted in the *Mohenjo-Daro* seal, in the *Ṛgveda Vāyus* are prayed to bring the offering of honey close to the *Aśvattha* tree where victorious people sit, cows procreate without getting thin, and barley is cooked.[20] It shows that if the *Aśvattha* tree was sacred to the Indus people, it was no less sacred to the Vedic ones. Secondly, if in the *Ṛgveda, Vāyus,* the gods of air, are prayed to bring the offerings of honey to the *peepal* tree, in *Mohenjo-Daro* a god intimately connected with them is standing between its branches. In fact, if *Vāyus* and *Maruts* are related with the leaves of the *peepal* tree understandably on account of the latter's getting affected so much by their blowing, it is quite in the fitness of things that *Rudra*, their father and the god of eternal constancy, is standing at its root and is being worshipped by the two-footed and the four-footed alike. He indeed is the eternal constancy lying at the root of perpetual flux. It is on account of this constancy that he is being prayed to by the devotee so as to emulate him. Through this action the fleeting wants to be transformed into the eternal. In the words of *Dirghatamas*, the delicious fruit of the cosmic *peepal* tree cannot be relished until and unless one knows the Father.[21] It is this Father who is standing at the root of the *peepal* tree as is depicted in the seal. The human devotee is seeking to know and emulate him through self-effacement. The animal with human face standing behind him is perhaps his own animal nature intended to be offered to the deity for self-transformation. This is suggested further by its composite nature wherein it is partly goat, partly bull and partly man. A composite creation like this and particularly when introduced in such a highly figurative context cannot but be deeply symbolic. The human face with the animal body is suggestive of its being basically man having his animal nature magnified. As bull and goat both are the animals of sacrifice, the combination of them in this figure indicates that it is meant for being sacrificed. The seven human figures depicted at the bottom of the seal may represent the seven sons or daughters of *Viśpati*, the Father, as the case may be, attending upon him or singing in his praise, as has been

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20 अत्राह तद् वहेथे मध्व आहुतिं यमश्वत्थमुपतिष्ठन्त जायवो अस्मे ते सन्तु जायवः।
शाकं गावः सुवते पच्यते यवो न ते वाय उप दस्यन्ति धेनवो नाप दस्यन्ति धेनवः।। *RV.I.135.8.*

21 यस्मिन् वृक्षे मध्वदः सुपर्णा निविशन्ते सुवते चाधि विश्वे।
तस्येदाहुः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वग्रे तन्नोनशद् यः पितरं न वेद।। *Ibid.,I.164.22.*

conceived by *Dīrghatamas*.[22]

Adorning the deity with a pair of horns may be viewed as another example of the tendency of plastic representation of abstract ideas. To give horn to a man-like figure is obviously ludicrous. To some, it may look demoniac too. But, as a matter of fact, horn belongs originally to animals which, if deified, may easily lend the same to the ensuing deity. An instant example of it is the image of the divine bull with four horns as referred to earlier. If a `*great god*' (*maho devah*) may be conceived as having horns and even as many as four in this Rgvedic instance, there is nothing devilish in giving the same to the Indus deity. In fact, the horns of the latter are very well explicable in terms of the present assumption. When *Rudra's* sons would have come to assume the form of animals in the imagination of the Indus sculptor on the basis of the similes used by the Rgvedic seer, it would have been but in the fitness of things to accord some semblance of animality to the father also. Addition of horns to the head was perhaps the easiest way to that end. Moreover, being associated with the animal, horns are symbolic of power and ferocity which indeed are characteristic features of *Rudra*. As such, the feature of horns on his head might have come to be extended to other *Paśupati* seals also where he figures even all alone. The extension may partly be due to the analogy of the prominent seal and partly due to the inherent symbolic sense of the horns.

The above details are sufficient to drive home the conclusion that there was a close connection between the Rgvedic seers and the builders of the Indus civilisation and that therefore the latter could bring out in plastic form some of the more striking images envisioned by the seers.

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22 अत्रापश्यं विश्पतिं सप्तपुत्रम्। *Ibid.I.164.1.*
सप्त स्वसारो अभि सं नवन्ते यत्र गवां निहिता सप्त नाम। *Ibid.I.164.3.*

Philosophical Possibilities of the Veda

The Veda has been regarded as a unique repository of knowledge since the very beginning of its inception. Indeed it is this high regard for the Veda, which has been instrumental in its preservation since that hoary past without the aid of the art and material of writing. The *Upaniṣads*, which have been held so high in philosophical circles, always turn to the Veda when seeking to expound relatively more difficult propositions. The six systems of Indian philosophy also consider the Vedas the supreme authority in philosophical matters lying particularly beyond the reach of perception and inference. In this regard, the position of the Veda has been defined rather categorically in a verse occurring in *Sāyaṇa*'s commentary on the Veda. According to this verse, whatever problem is incapable of being solved either by perception or inference, the Veda is found effective in its solution and herein lies the real relevance of the Veda as an inexhaustible source of knowledge.[1]

In keeping with this high regard for the Veda, these systems have accorded to it a unique position as a peculiar source of knowledge distinct from perception and inference, that is *śruti pramāṇa*. But when it comes to actual use of Vedic doctrines in the formulation of these systems of philosophy, there is not much co-ordination between the professed ideal and the actual practice, particularly in systems other than Vedanta. Scarcely do these systems make use of Vedic mantras in the exposition of their respective theories and concepts. The accomplishment of Vedanta also in this respect is not so satisfactory as it apparently looks. The division of the Veda into *karma-kāṇda* and *jñāna -kāṇda* did rather disservice to the cause of philosophy as well as to the Veda itself. As per this division, the Vedic *Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas* came to be categorised together as *karma-kāṇda* while only the *Upaniṣad* could get the status of *jñāna -kāṇda*. Consequently, the seekers of knowledge, particularly of the philosophical variety, concentrated their attention almost exclusively on the *Upaniṣads* leaving the rest of the Veda to be dealt with only by the *karma-kāṇdin*. The latter himself, on the other hand, leaving everything metaphysical to the mute care of the Veda itself, has confined himself almost exclusively to the *Brāhmaṇas* no matter be it performance of sacrifice or creation of a system of philosophy, namely, the *Mimāmsā* system. Vedic mantras are treated as relevant in the performance of the sacrifice only to the extent as the Brahamanic

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1 प्रत्यक्षेणानुमित्या वा यस्तूपायो न बुध्यते।
एनं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद्वेदस्य वेदता।। *Sāyaṇa Bhasya on Atharvaveda XIX.72.1*

injunction concerned calls for their recitation on particular occasions. In course of such recitation, just the correctness of pronunciation has been regarded as important and scarcely the meaning of the mantra. As regards the *Uttara Mimāmsā* or *Vedanta*, it has relied totally on the Upanişads and has come across only those mantras from *Samhitās* which happen to be quoted in the *Upanişads*.

Herein lies the fallacy of division of the Veda into the *karma-kāṇda* and the *jñāna -kāṇda*. When the same Vedic mantra may come to be treated as replete with *jñāna* only by virtue of being quoted and discussed in *Upanişad* and be treated as simply a sacrificial formula otherwise, the fault lies not with the mantra but with the circumstances under which it came to be treated as such. If the unnecessary dichotomy between *karma-kāṇda* and *jñāna -kāṇda* were not created, philosophers would naturally have turned to the Veda as a whole in their search for supra perceptual and suprainferential knowledge and understandably would have made Indian philosophy all the more richer in very many ways.

We can take, for instance, the problem of mutual relationship between *Brahman* and *Jivātman* in Vedanta. Needless to point out that this relationship has been conceived in several ways within the Vedantic fold itself giving thus rise to so many schools within the system by no means complimentary to it. The problem has been debated for centuries and throughout the whole country generating enormous heat and dissension rather than light and decisiveness of conclusion whatever. Since the problem was metaphysical, it had to be decided not by the principles of perception and inference but by correct understanding of the basic Vedic text relevant to it as per the fundamental postulate of the six systems of philosophy accepting the Veda as an unassailable source of metaphysical knowledge. That basic text incontrovertibly is the *dvā suparṇā* mantra as occurring in the beginning of the concluding part of the *Mundaka Upanişad*. It talks of two beautiful birds associated with and friendly to each other, embracing the self-same tree with this difference, however, that one of them relishes the sweet fruits while the other one simply casts its illumination around.[2] But very few people know that this mantra is originally Rgvedic occurring in the famous *Asya Vāmīya* hymn of the *Samhitā* as seen by *Dīrghatamas*. Partly due to absence of this information and partly due to negligent attitude towards the *Samhitā* in

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2 द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्ति अनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति ।। *Mun.Up. III.1.1*

metaphysical matters, *Ācāryas* and scholars kept their attention confined to the *Upaniṣad* in course of debates resulting in dissensions. So far as I recollect, none of the *Ācāryas* has gone to the *Samhitā* to see if any solution to the vexed problem can be found out by reading the mantra in its original context, which was absolutely necessary in view of the pre-eminence of the Vedic seer in relationship to the Upaniṣadic sage who quotes from the former and elaborates upon it as understood by him. There is no doubt about it that the sage elaborates upon the mantra very well but as he too singles out only this mantra for quotation and elaboration leaving unnoticed the two consecutive mantras dealing with the same motif, one can in no case claim finality to any viewpoint evolved without taking due cognisance of the ideas embodied in those mantras.

To elaborate on the point, the *Samhitā* and the *Upaniṣad* both devote three mantras each to the problem of relationship between the individual Self and the Supreme Being. In both the texts, the first mantra is common, and elucidates the relationship in terms of two birds sitting on one and the same tree with this difference, however, that while one of the birds is relishing the fruits, the other one is only casting its lustre all around. The other two mantras in both the texts can evidently be taken as further elaboration on this fundamental vision. As regards the *Upaniṣad*, it characterises the bird eating the fruit as completely absorbed in eating and suffering helplessly. It, however, gets redeemed of this suffering when it happens to see the other bird in its magnanimity. This other bird is most pleasing in look, is the creator and controller as well as the source of creation. Having known this bird, the person concerned transcends the relativity of noble and ignoble action and thus getting cleared of all blemishes, attains to the highest state of equilibrium.[3] In these expository verses, obviously, the act of eating has been taken to represent doing good and evil acts and consequently getting deluded in this world. The way out of this state of delusion, helplessness and suffering has been visualised in the form of seeing or indeed realising the Supreme Being in the form of creator, sustainer and source of the creation. Here the tree serves as a trap motivating the Self to remain entrapped in it and suffer. This picture of the world must evidently have accentuated the tendency towards escapism and craving for salvation,

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3 समाने वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नोऽनीशया शोचति मुह्यमानः।
जुष्टं यदा पश्यत्यन्यमीशमस्य महिमानमिति वीतशोकः।।
यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णं कर्तारमीशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम्।
तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति।। *Ibid.III.1.2-3*

attainable through establishment of complete sameness with the Supreme. It has also given rise to reflectionism under which the bird eating fruits is supposed to be just a reflection of the higher one cast in the mirror of the world. Under this scheme of things, total liquidation of the world for the person concerned at least becomes necessary for the reflection to get merged with its original being which is the Supreme. The cult of renunciation has emerged as a necessary offshoot of the insubstantiality of the world.

The Rgvedic elucidation of the basic vision, however, is somewhat significantly different from it. In the second one of the two elucidatory mantras, it brings in the beautiful feathered birth representing the Self in the plural and thus makes the tree of the world the place of dwelling of a multitude of selves living and procreating there. This tree is envisaged as laden with fruits, sweet as well as our, the latter lying on lower levels while the sweetest at the apex. While the lower ones are available to each and every one of the birds sitting on the tree, the sweetest ones can be tasted only by those who know the Father.[4]

In other mantra, the Father has been identified as the ruler and protector of the world. His basic position on the tree of the world has been located at that point where the beautiful-feathered birds have been singing incessantly in a chorus, as it were, their respective shares of the immortality. He, however, along with all His wisdom has entered into the being of the seer, no matter howsoever unripe in his make and accomplishment.[5]

Thus, in these two elucidatory mantras, the Supreme Being by virtue of being considered as the father, ruler and protector of the tree of the world carries out all His responsibilities *vis-à-vis* the latter that is its creation, sustenance, control and guidance.

The possibility of His positive entrance into the being of the seer bears out His active interest not only in the universal, as is evident from His creatorship, etc., of the latter, but also equally well in the individual. As per this idea, it is not necessary for the individual at all to make his

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4 यस्मिन् वृक्षे मध्वदः सुपर्णा निविशन्ते सुवते चाधि विश्वे।
तस्येदाहुः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वग्रे तन्नोन्नशद्यःपितरं न वेद।। *RV.I.164.22*

5. यत्रा सुपर्णा अमृतस्य भागमनिमेषं विदथाभिस्वरन्ति।
इनो विश्वस्य भुवनस्य गोपाः स मा धीरः पाकमत्रा विवेश।। *Ibid.I.164.21.*

worldly existence evanescent and then and then alone have the possibility of attaining to sameness with Him and the consequent redemption. He, on the contrary, has full provision for living in the world a substantial life and yet have the possibility of realising the presence of the Divine within himself. Here the individual does not get evaporated into the Supreme, but, on the contrary, the latter Himself enters into the individual, however, only if the latter comes to realise his unripeness and the necessity of getting ripened.

In this scheme of things, the universal also gets fully restored to its substantiality without anyway curbing the supremacy of the Supreme. By virtue of being its father, protector and controller, He continues to remain all in all of it and yet instead of reducing it to the negative position of the mirror of falsity, allows it to remain the tree of creation, thriving in its greenery, fruit-bearing potentiality and capacity of serving eternally as a resort of the multitude of individuals with all sorts of possibilities looming large before them like numberless varieties of fruits hanging around the bird sitting on the tree. Conception of the world as a tree in itself is an idea of paramount significance in view of its organic nature and the entailing cognisance of the organic interrelations of things here.

In this grand model of organic relationship among things in the world in itself, of the individual with the universal and of the both with the Supreme Being by virtue of His being the father, there lies full possibility of fulfilment of all the three factors of the Reality without anyone of them getting side-tracked, ignored or oppressed by the other, as has been the case with the traditional Vedanta seeking since millennia to establish a satisfactory state of equipoise among the three factors, namely the individual, the universal and the transcendent, and jumping from one equation to the other in the form of Vedantic schools of non-dualism, qualified non-dualism, pure dualism, dualism, etc., and yet not being able to evolve any consensus on such a fundamental issue.

This question, again, is very much concerned with the status of Becoming in the framework of the Reality. The school of non-dualism refuses to concede any place to Becoming from the highest and really real viewpoint except the illusory under the apprehension that it would otherwise curb the eternity of the Eternal. Buddhism, on the other hand, admits of the Becoming alone and does not feel inclined to accord any reality to the Being as it finds itself capable of knowing only the Becoming and by no means the Being. This polarisation of viewpoints on such a fundamental level has created a deep chasm in the Indian philosophy since the time of

the great *Buddha* and has widened it further with the advent of *Śaṅkara*, leading to the costly business of conversion and re-conversion on the national level and having left its scar to bedevil the Indian life even today to a certain extent. The issue was declared as neck-breaking by *Yājñavalkya* as early as the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in response to *Gārgī's* pertinent question as to the source of *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality. It means that there is something which does not admit of change and yet it is out of that apparently unchanging reality that everything in the world has come with all its proneness to change. In this state of things, out of the three, namely, the changeless reality, the change and the changing actuality, at least one has had to be declared as false. While the *Buddha* had the vision of the falsity of the changeless reality, *Śaṅkara* expounded at least the relative falsity of the change and the changing actuality. Non-admittance of Becoming on the part of *Śaṅkara* and of Being on the part of *Buddha* resulted in the great chasm referred to above.

To a certain extent the same is the story with the *Sāmkhya* system. Faced with this problem of co-existence of Being and Becoming, it divides the reality almost irreconcilably into the *Puruṣa* representing the Being, and the *Prakṛti* standing for the Becoming. While admitting co-existence of the two parallels, it fails to account for their co-existence itself, talking of it on the one hand as meant for redemption of the *Puruṣa* and on the other that the latter does not really ever get bound at all. This blowing hot and cold in the same breath makes the solution given by it unconvincing.

Being faced with this problem, these three prominent schools of Indian philosophy, though poles apart otherwise, end in the common conclusion of escapism, no matter be it characterised as escape from the world or from the *Prakṛti*. None of them feels inclined to take the world along with it to any finality whatever.

The Ṛgveda, however, provides us with certain definite visions which are so integral as not to permit any such schism at all in the frame of the reality. One such significant vision has been produced by seer *Plāta*. It conceives of the heaven and the earth as forming a divine boat sailing under the wise guidance of *Aditi* towards its divine destiny.[6] This magnificent boat is described as unleaking and as provided with efficient

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6. सुत्रामाणं पृथिवीं द्यामनेहसं सुशर्माणमदितिं सुप्रणीतिम्।
दैवीं नावं स्वरित्रामनागसमस्रवन्तीमा रुहेमा स्वस्तये।। *Ibid.X.63.10.*

oars. It is sailing automatically on the water of Infinity represented as *Aditi*. Its direction also is determined by the same Infinity. Mankind is invited by the seer to seat itself on such a board of universal progression so as to reach its destiny, which is the divine *Aditi* herself. *Aditi* is the principle of integrality lying at the root of division. The world emerges from her just as a boat sails on water and is destined to reach her ultimately under her own guidance. It is she who as the principle of Becoming retains continuity of the Being even in the midst of the process. Cognisance of her as the eternal consort of the Supreme Being involves admittance of Becoming along with Being on equal footing. Admittance of *Aditi* as coeval to the Supreme Being annuls the necessity of taking resort to the dubious *Māyā* for explaining emergence of the Becoming out of the Being. She also serves as *Prakṛti* of the *Sāmkhyas* without having the necessity of being categorically separated from the *Puruşa* in his plurality as well as ultimate oneness which, however, lies beyond the purview of the *Sāmkhya*.

It is also interesting to note that the name of the seer of the mantra concerned, that is *Plāta*, bears profound relevance to his philosophy in its derivative sense. The word *Plāta* has behind it the root *plu*, to float. It, therefore, seems likely that he was given this significant name on account of his vision of the universe as always afloat like a boat.

Conception of the universe as always afloat is something significantly congruent to modern science also. No matter, be the universe regarded as expanding or in a steady state, it necessarily has the idea of flux and float underlying it. In fact, the ascendancy of the philosophy of becoming in the modern times is the positive outcome of the above viewpoint evidently put forth by scientists in the modern era. Science in itself, however, has been unable to show so far any goal-orientation of the float of the universe. *A.N. Whitehead* somehow has been able to visualise this orientation in the form of the apotheosis of the world just in the twentieth century through introduction of the idea of God in his cosmology stepping beyond the dialectics of science. The *Rgvedic* seer *Plāta*, however, envisaged the idea of the floating universe millennia ago and that also with its well defined goal-orientation in the form of the divine transformation. Such a transformation indeed becomes a logical necessity after the acceptance of the Becoming as a reality on the one hand and the Divine itself as the material as well as the efficient cause of it.

Needless to point out that philosophy today has not remained a matter of

just logical consistency but over and above that it is demanding more and more persistently rigorous verifiability of its propositions. This is why any cosmology today cannot afford to be treated as feasible until and unless it stands the test of scientific rigour. The Vedantic proposition that the world is a creation of Māyā does not carry weight today under the scientific frame of thinking. Explanation of the actual entirely in terms of delusion is not found convincing today. The atomism of the *Vaiśeşika*, on the other hand, though found fascinating in this age of nuclear physics, has become antiquated today in the face of astounding developments in the area made by scientists in modern times. The *Vaiśeşika* atom as simply the sixth part of a visible collocation of atoms called *tryasreṇu* is too simplistic to stand a comparison to the modern physicist's atom with its very much smaller size and yet having a number of electrons taking round within it at the velocity nearing that of light and yet without any aberration of collision. The *Sāmkhya*, on the other hand, however, still retains its relevance through its explanation of the actual universe as formed out of a combination of the five basic elements called *mahābhūtas*. Now when the modern scientist has come to deny substantiality to *akasa* and prove *vāyu* as a sheer local spectacle, the *Prakṛti* of the *Sāmkhyas* herself has begun to appear too much lame to produce any tangible result by herself in regard to the creation of the universe. Under such circumstances, however, her position can be strengthened considerably by drawing from the Veda the idea of the role of *Agni* in the creation of the tangible universe.

In fact the phenomenology of the world has been reduced to the level of actuality by science today in regard to its origin as well as functioning. After reducing space to the status of a sheer component of the space-time continuum and air to that of a retinue of certain bodies including our petty earth, it conceives of the creation of the world as the work of fire existing as a ball characterised by infinite density and heat. Due to the pressure of the density, science tells us, the ball exploded with a massive bang, spreading out in numberless sparks getting consolidated in course of time in the form of the heavenly bodies including our sun along with its planets. The creation of the universe from fire, of course, is very much hinted at in the *Chāndogya Upanişad* also in its observation that when the Being wished to become many It created initially fire, which in its turn produced water while the latter the food representing the solid matter.[7]

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7. सत्त्वेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम्। तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति। तत् तेजोऽसृजत। तत् तेज ऐक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति। तदपोऽसृजत। ...ता आप ऐक्षन्त बह्व्यः स्याम प्रजायेमहीति। ता अन्नमसृजन्त। *Ch.Up. VI.2.2-4.*

This Upaniṣadic hint, however, is so scanty as to be treated subsequently as merely suggestive of what is called *pañcīkaraṇa*, that is intermixing of the five elements with one another in a certain proportion, putting in abeyance the actual creativity of fire at least from the viewpoint of the philosophical thinking. This disregard for the role of fire in the creation of the universe on behalf of the Indian philosopher evidently was due to his virtual apathy towards the Vedic *Samhitās*. Had he kept himself in close touch with them, he would not have missed the idea of creation of the interstellar space at least through the agency of fire as it is very well envisaged in the *Samhitās*, particularly in a mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*. In this mantra, in course of showing how the lustre of *Agni* is to be found in heavenly bodies, in earth, in vegetation and in water, it has also significantly been pointed out that the same lustre has expanded the interstellar space by virtue of being itself the primeval ocean of illumination of the same kind as is to be found in the human consciousness.[8] If cognisance of the role of fire in the creation of the cosmos serves as the basis of the theory of relativity, inherence of the same fire in the human perceiver as his consciousness forms the foundation of the theory of complementarity. Essential oneness of the percept and the percipient both transforms the mechanical fixity of the universe into the dynamic probability bridging the dichotomy of the subject and the object, which has been the greatest stumbling block in the path of real philosophy, *darsana*.

As a matter of fact, what the Upaniṣadic sages have accomplished in the discovery of the underlying oneness between the individual Self and the Supreme Being formulated in the form of the *mahāvākyas* "*I am Brahman*", "*That thou art*", and "*This Self is Brahman*" [9] and the *Vedantic Ācāryas* have reiterated and elaborated upon so profoundly has yet to be accomplished in Indian philosophy in regard to the relationship between the individual and the universal on the one hand and the universal and the transcendent on the other as hinted at in the fourth *mahāvākya* -- "*All this is Brahman*"[10] particularly in letter and spirit of the modern age. For the accomplishment of this task, no matter, howsoever colossal, the Veda has sufficient material to be drawn upon fruitfully.

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8. अग्ने यत् ते दिवि वर्चः पृथिव्यां यदोषधीष्वप्स्वा यजत्र।
येनान्तरिक्षमुर्वाततन्थ त्वेषः स भानुरर्णवो नृचक्षाः।। *RV.III.22.2*
9. अहं ब्रह्मास्मि। *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I.4.10*
तत्त्वमसि। *Chāndogya Upaniṣad I.4.10*
अयमात्मा ब्रह्म। *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV.4.5*
10 सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म। *Chāndogya Upaniṣad III.14.1.*

Initiation and the Sacrificial Post

After the Vedic knowledge was acquired through *tapas*, it had got to be transmitted to the next generation for its preservation and utilisation, as it was considered to be of supreme importance for the ennoblement and transformation of the human nature. It is indeed owing to the utmost puncteliousness shown by the seers in the transmission of that knowledge that it could be preserved so exceptionally well in a more or less living form in this country so as to survive even until now. In the process of transmission, due care was taken in regard to both the content and the recipient of it. If the content was sought to be transmitted in an absolutely intact form, the recipient of it had to be so well prepared in everyway as not to let down the seer and his stupendous effort. This is evident from the importance that has been given in this tradition to the ritual of initiation.

In this ritual, the basic mantra that has been used throughout the whole tradition relates to welcoming the person to be initiated as youthful, well-dressed, having a piece of rope tied around his waist, capable of attaining to higher glory after being born and as being raised upward by seers, wise, self-realised and inclined to the Divine.[1]

This mantra is well and good in so far as it envisages the recipient of the knowledge as youthful, cultured, amenable to progress and worthy of being elevated by wise seers to the higher gradient of wisdom and devotion to the Divine. This is what is generally understood as the basic import of the mantra as used in the ritual of initiation even today. But when we trace the mantra back to its source in the *Ṛgveda*, what to our utter surprise we find is that the deity or subject-matter of the mantra or indeed of the whole hymn, with the solitary exception of the eighth mantra in it, is not any initiate, human or divine, but the wooden post used in course of the sacrifice particularly to tie the sacrificial animal to it. To make a review of some of the details of the hymn, the wooden post is anointed with honey and is erected in the sacrificial ground. It is hewn by an axe before being raised. It is hoped that the root from which this post has been cut would grow in hundreds subsequently.

Now the problem is what this mantra with the sacrificial post as its deity or subject-matter has to do with the youth going to be initiated by the

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1 युवा सुवासाः परिवीत आगात् स उ श्रेयान् भवति जायमानः।
तं धीरासः कवय उन्नयन्ति स्वाध्यो मनसा देवयन्तः।। *RV.III.8.4*

teacher into the mystery of the Vedic lore. Is it due to the use of the word *yuvā*, youth, in the mantra that it has come to be associated with the ritual of initiation? If so, this is too inadequate to justify its use in this ritual.

With this problem in mind, we may explore into the symbolic significance of the sacrificial post itself so as to see if it has to offer anything in this regard. To begin with, it is beyond dispute that in the Vedic milieu sacrifice is a symbolic act designed as a tool of human transformation. What *yoga* intends to achieve by the introvertive way, *yajña* seeks to achieve the same through the projective way. While in *yoga*, baser emotions and ideas are sought to be got rid of by way of elimination, in *yajña*, they are represented by gross objects which in their turn are used as a positive means of ascension to the higher plane of being. This can be illustrated through the symbolism of the sacrificial post, called *yūpa*.

The word *yūpa* has been derived in a twofold manner. According to one view, it is derived from the root *yup*, to obstruct. In support of this derivation may be quoted the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* according to which the real function of the *yūpa* lies in safeguarding the sacrifice from being misused by the unworthy to achieve what he does not deserve.[2] Similarly, according to the *Kāthaka Samhitā*, the gods with a view to obstructing the entry of the *Asuras* to the heaven made use of the *yūpa* in creating obstruction for them in all the directions: herein lies the real significance of the *yūpa*.[3] According to another view, this word has been derived from the root *yu*, to unite. In support of this derivation may be quoted a statement from the *Taittiriya Samhitā*, according to which the gods reached the heaven by making use of the *yūpa* while the seers understood this secret by means of the same *yūpa* and herein lies the real significance of the *yūpa*.[4] According to this statement, *yūpa* serves as the connecting link or bridge between the heaven and the earth in the ontological sense in the case of the gods and in the epistemic sense in the case of the seers.

The number of *yūpas* used in a sacrifice, like the horse-sacrifice, is twenty-one. From amongst them twenty *yūpas* are placed in the exterior

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2 तं वै यज्ञं यूपेनैवायोपयंस्तद्यूपस्य यूपत्वम् । *Ait.Brah.II.2*

3. ते देवाः अकायन्तेमं स्वर्गम् लोकमन्यो नांनुप्रजानीयादिति ते दिशोऽयोपयन्। यद्दिशोऽयोस्पयंस्तद् यूपस्य यूपत्वम् ।। *Kathaka Sam.XXVI.6*

4. ते देवा यूपेन योपयित्वा सुवर्गं लोकमायन् तमृषयो यूपेनैवानु प्रजानन्। तद्यूपस्य यूपत्वम्।। *Tait.Sam.VI.3.4.7*

while the twenty-first one is placed in the middle of them. Along with their number, the length of each one of them is also twenty-one span of the sacrificer's palm. The number twenty-one in both these cases is symbolic. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* explains this number in terms of the total of the number of twelve months, five seasons, three worlds and the sun or the *Prajāpati* as the twenty-first one.[5] Needless to point out that the twelve months of the year and the five seasons stand symbolically for time as such while the three worlds signify the totality of space. Thus by virtue of being representative of the year, comprising the twelve months and five seasons, on the one hand, and of the totality of space, comprising the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven, on the other, the twenty posts installed in the exterior symbolise the whole of the cosmos extending in space and kept continued to exist in time. The remaining twenty-first pillar located in the middle of them would thus represent the central agency which forms the source of both the extension and the continuance of the cosmos. That central agency is *Prajāpati* , the creator of the cosmos. Identification of it in the form of the sun is just symbolical. Just as the sun forms the source of our solar system along with the planets and the sub-planets lying in it, and serves as the central agency controlling the movement of all of them, even so *Prajāpati* serves as the source and controller of the cosmos existing in space and time.

The symbolism of the twenty-first pillar gets compounded by the quantification of its length as of twenty-one spans of the human palm. This number has also understood behind it the same twelve months, five seasons, three worlds and the *Prajāpati* . If it, as the twenty-first one amongst the pillars, represents *Prajāpati* in his more or less transcendence of the rest of the reality extending in space and continuing in time, it as comprising twenty-one spans of the human palm symbolises him as comprising the same reality also besides keeping its transcendence intact, as has beautifully been made out in the opening mantras of the hymn to *Puruṣa*. To recall that imagery for ready reference, the *Puruṣa* has been stated in the very first mantra of the hymn as thousand-headed, thousand-eyed and thousand-footed symbolising his all-embracingness, and at the same time also as transcending all by a measure of ten fingers. The same ideas of all-embracingness and transcendence have been sought to be communicated through the idea of the pillar as the twenty-

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5 एकविंशतिर्यूपाः सर्व एकविंशत्यरत्नयः। *Sat.Brah XIII.4.4.5*
एकविंशत्यरत्नयः। एकविंशो वा एष य एष तपति। द्वादश मासाः पञ्चर्तवस्त्रय इमे लोकाः।
असावादित्य एकविंशः। सोऽश्वमेधः। एष प्रजापतिः। *Ibid.,XIII.4.4.11*

first one on the one hand and as the twenty-one spans on the human palm on the other.

Indeed it is some such pillar which has been described in detail as the deity of a famous Atharvavedic hymn known as the *Skambha* hymn. In this hymn has been given the sketch of a pillar in whose different parts have been supposed to dwell *Tapas, Ṛta, Vrata, Śraddhā,* and *Satya* as hypostatised.[6] It has further been stated implicitly that the earth dwells in one part of it, the intermediate space in the other and the heaven in the third one while the beyond in the remaining section of it.[7] It has further been queried in the same continuation as to what part of the pillar represents the half months, what the months along with the year as also the seasons and sub-seasons lying within the latter.[8] All these details tally well with the *Prajāpati* of the *Brāhmaṇa* as represented by the sacrificial pillar discussed above. Interestingly enough the *Skambha* of the *Atharvaveda* has also been associated straightaway with sacrifice in the sixteenth mantra of the hymn in which it has been inquired as to where lies that pillar whose four primeval veins form the source of the four directions as also where the sacrifice has taken its colossal strides.[9] The reference to sacrifice in course of the account of the *Skambha* of such metaphysical nature bears out the possibility of its representation in the sacrifice as the central piece of the whole scenario which obviously is the middlemost pillar of the ground. Sacrifice being the replica of the cosmic process, it is but natural for the middlemost post standing in the sacrificial ground to represent the absolute stasis lying in the centre and serving as the source of the entire dynamics. In yet another mantra of the same Atharvavedic hymn that *Skambha* has been described as the reserved wealth being guarded by all the thirty-three gods. In the mantra next to it that reserved wealth has again been characterised as the Supreme Brahman while the knowers of it as the gods, cognisance of whom as such is said to be equivalent to the immediate knowledge of the

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6 कस्मिन्नङ्गे तपो अस्याधि तिष्ठति कस्मिन्नङ्गं ऋतमस्याध्याहितम्
क्व व्रतं श्रद्धास्य तिष्ठति कस्मिन्नङ्गे सत्यमस्य प्रतिष्ठितम्।। *AV.X.7.1*

7 कस्मिन्नङ्गे तिष्ठति भूमिरस्य कस्मिन्नङ्गे तिष्ठत्यन्तरिक्षम्।
कस्मिन्नङ्गे तिष्ठत्याहिता द्यौः कस्मिन्नङ्गे तिष्ठत्युत्तरं दिवः।। Ibid., *X.7.3*

8 क्वार्धमासाः क्व यन्ति मासाः सम्वत्सरेण सह संविदानाः।
यत्र यन्त्यृतवो यत्रार्तवः स्कम्भं तं ब्रूहि कतमः स्विदेव सः।। *Ibid., X.7.5*

9 यस्य चतस्रो प्रदिशो नाड्यस्तिष्ठन्ति प्रथमाः।
यज्ञो यत्र पराकान्तः स्कम्भं तं ब्रूहि कतमः स्विदेव सः। *Ibid., X.7.16*

Brahman.[10] The *Ṛgveda* describes the same *Skambha* as occupying the seat of the Highest Reality which is the undivided state of being prior to its manifestation in diverse ways as well as the final support of all whatever is there in existence.[11]

This is sufficient to bear out the point that it was quite usual for the Vedic seer to image out the Ultimate Reality as a pillar serving as the support of everything. Just as a pillar supports a roof quite large in size from a spot central to it, even so that Ultimate Reality serves as the support of the whole of the cosmos from behind it and by remaining central to it. In view of its apparent invisibility as also somewhat cognisability in the depth of the human psyche, it, in the same Atharvavedic hymn towards the end, has been described as a golden cane hidden in water as the secret Lord of beings or as one which can be known only to the secret Lord of the creation.[12]

It is this Reality which has got represented by the central post of the sacrifice. In the horse-sacrifice seventeen animals are tied to this post for being sacrificed. These animals, according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, are symbolical of the entire creation manifesting itself in course of time symbolised by the year comprising twelve months and five seasons.[13] Offering of time in all its divisions to the Timeless is the way to reach the latter by means of time, not, of course, by getting stuck to it but by passing through it with the perfect sense of detachment. The representation of the factors of time by animals meant for the sacrifice, has an additional sense implicit in it. That is the animality of the human nature as embodied in him in the form of what may broadly be pointed out as his instinctive behaviour.

Herein lies the secret of representation of the initiate by the sacrificial post as envisaged for the first time by *Viśvāmitra* in the mantra quoted at the outset. Since the individual, according to the vision of the Vedic seer,

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10. यस्य त्रयस्त्रिंशद् देवा निधिं रक्षन्ति सर्वदा ।
निधिं तमद्य को वेद यं देवा अभिरक्षथ।
यत्र देवा ब्रह्मविदो ब्रह्मज्येष्ठमुपासते।
यो वै तान् विद्यात् प्रत्यक्षं स ब्रह्मा वेदिता स्यात्।। *Ibid., X.7.23-24*

11 आयोर्ह स्कम्भ उपमस्य नीले पथां विसर्गे धरूणेषु तस्थौ।। *RV.X.5.6*

12 यो वेतसं हिरण्ययं तिष्ठन्तं सलिले वेद।
स वै गुह्यः प्रजापतिः।। *AV.X.7.41*

13 सप्तदशो वै प्रजापतिः। प्रजापतिरश्वमेधोऽश्वमेधस्यैवाप्त्यै। *Śat.Brah.XIII.2.2.13*

is a replica of the Transcendent itself along with its manifestations, he can very well be represented by all those symbols which normally are used to represent the Transcendent. If the sacrificial post, for instance, has been used in the Veda to represent that Transcendent Being, it can as well be used to symbolise the individual also though not in his surface being but in his entire psychic depth where at least he is making preparations for the realisation of the Transcendent as the golden reed lying in the deep water of his psychic being, as the *Atharvaveda* describes it. It is in this spirit that the *Atharvaveda* in yet another hymn addressed to the *Brahmaćārin* as the deity, describes the latter as the supporter of the earth and the heaven both as well as the fulfiller of the task of his teacher by means of his *tapas*.[14] In yet another mantra of the same hymn it has been stated that it is by means of the seed dropped by the *Brahmaćārin* at the apex that the four directions are being sustained on this earth.[15] In another mantra of the same hymn a little later it again has been observed that the *Brahmaćārin* is the *Ācārya* on the one hand and *Prajāpati* , the creator, on the other.[16] This, no doubt, is a very high compliment showered on the *Brahmaćārin*, but it is by no means unrealistic. It has been bestowed upon him in view of the immensity of potentialities lying compressed in him. It only bears out the potential equivalence between the individual and the universal as well as between him and the Transcendent.

Initiation is the gateway to actualisation of the latent potentialities of the individual. The ceremony of initiation of the student by the teacher has been described in an utmost figurative way in an Atharvavedic mantra which continues to be recited even today on the occasion. According to this mantra, the teacher makes the student enter into his womb and remain there for three nights so that when the student is re-born, even the gods come to see him.[17] The meaning of the mantra is apparently nonsensical inasmuch as it involves attribution of the function to the male which is peculiar to the female. This anomaly can be removed only by taking the description in the symbolic sense, which is inherent in it. Just as the mother develops the child out of the insignificant seed by keeping it within her, even so the teacher opens out the potentialities of

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14 स दाधार पृथिवीं दिवं च स आचार्यं तपसा पिपर्ति । । *AV. XI.5.1*

15 ब्रह्मचारी सिञ्चति सानौ रेतः पृथिव्यां तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश्चतस्रः । । *Ibid.,XI.5.12*

16 आचार्यो ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्मचारी प्रजापतिः । *Ibid., XI.5.16*

17 आचार्य उपनयमानो ब्रह्मचारिणं कृणुते गर्भमन्तः ।
तं रात्रीस्तिस्र उदरे विभर्ति तं जातं द्रष्टुमभिसंयन्ति देवाः । । *Ibid., XI.5.3.*

the student, a completely raw stuff otherwise, so as to grow into an intellectual-spiritual luminary by keeping him in his closest contact initially for three days and nights. While the child grows in the womb of the mother physically, the student grows in the contact of the teacher intellectually and spiritually. Both the cases of growth are by far dissimilar mutually, one being physical, the other intellectual-spiritual. And yet the intimateness with which the growth is brought about by the respective agencies is common to both in its intensity. It is the intensive intimateness of the physical contact as well as the feeling of the mother towards the child which provides the teacher with the ideal pattern of behaviour towards his pupil if he wants to transform his raw pupil into an intellectual-spiritual prodigy. The mother does not do anything herself in the shaping and growth of the child except keeping it in a most intimate relationship with herself. Similarly, according to the vision of the seer, the worthy teacher does nothing but see the pupil's intellectual and spiritual potentialities unfold fully by themselves. Thus the Socratic doctrine of learning is very well anticipated in this Atharvavedic mantra. What otherwise would have required volumes to communicate, has been communicated, thus, through a solitary stroke of symbolism created by transference of the exclusive function of one gender to the other.

The period of three nights allotted to the task of initiation of the pupil by the teacher is also significant. It is somehow to tally with the period of the nine months that a child takes to grow fully in the womb. One night of the teacher is supposed here to be equivalent to three months of the mother. Since the period of the teacher is symbolic, unlike that of the mother which is actual, it can afford to be manageably shorter. The indication to that period by night rather than by day, which too was equally well feasible, has its own sense to communicate. If day symbolises actuality as well as knowledge, night signifies potentiality as well as ignorance. During the period of initiation the teacher does not teach anything in detail but seeks to bring the pupil to the proper track of knowledge and understanding through his transformatory contact. That is something like preparing the sun for the great event of the daybreak.

That the indication to the initiatory period of three days by as many nights is not incidental, is evident from the *Katha Upaniṣad* also. When asked by his father out of fury to go to *Yama*, the god of death, *Naciketas* went to the latter and waited for him for three days as he was absent from his house during that period. After his return, he pointed out to young *Naciketas* that since he had waited for him for three nights without taking

any food, he deserved to have three boons granted from *Yama.*[18] It is a well known fact that *Naciketas* utilised those boons not for acquisition of anything material, which *Yama*, of course, was willing to grant to him from his own side, but for asking as many questions relating to worldly problem of mutual adjustment, intellectual problem of understanding the mystery of creation and the spiritual problem of self-realisation respectively. Thus all problems of life are covered by these three questions of *Naciketas* and get very much resolved through the answers of *Yama* offered to him in response to his pertinent questions.

In a way, what *Yama* transmitted to young *Naciketas* in that context forms the crux of the entire knowledge that used to be transmitted to the student of the Veda after he went through the process of initiation. *Naciketas'* sojourn to the region of the god of death and waiting for the arrival of him for three nights may indeed be treated as an archetypal representation of the phenomenon of initiation undergone by each student of the Vedic knowledge before he deserved himself to get it transmitted to him.

That the ritual of initiation is very much based on *Viśvāmitra's* mantra quoted at the outset gets also confirmed by the details elicited by the mantra coming immediately next to it in the hymn. According to this mantra, the sacrificial post, though born already, gets born again now on the most auspicious day when it is brought to the sacrificial ground and grows in stature in the presence of men where enlightened and wise seers sanctify it by means of higher wisdom communicated through their sacred words.[19] It is important to note that this mantra begins with the mention of the two births of the post, obviously one when it grew out of the mother earth in the wilderness of the forest completely unnoticed, and the other on the sacred sacrificial ground in the midst of enlightened and wise people devoted to the divine. It is the concept of two births mooted out by *Viśvāmitra* in this mantra apparently in regard to the sacrificial post which most probably formed the basis of the idea of the twice-born as is prevalent even today with respect to those really or supposedly initiated in the Vedic lore. That day continues to be considered as the most glorious one in the life of an individual on which he gets initiated in the secret of

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18 तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मेऽनश्नन् ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात् प्रति त्रीन् वरान् वृणीष्व ।। *Katha Up. I.9*

19 जातो जायते सुदिनत्वे अह्नां समर्य आ विदथे वर्धमानः।
पुनन्ति धीरा अपसो मनीषा देवया विप्र उदियर्ति वाचम्।। *RV.III.8.5*

this knowledge *par excellence* after being lifted from the lowly position of physical birth and growth in the same way as the tree-trunk of the wilderness gets selected to serve as the sacrificial post and is brought from the forest to the sacrificial ground, gets duly carved, anointed and raised by wise seers, sages and priests so as to serve as the symbol of the Eternal lying behind the ephemeral.

Needless to point out that the sacrificial post was used particularly in the animal sacrifice specially for tying the animal to it. The animal was selected from amidst a large number of them and was brought to the sacrificial ground and tied to the post before being actually sacrificed. This obviously is symbolic of identifying the `animal' in the sacrificer and killing it not for its total elimination but for its transformation so as to serve as the model of such elevation and transformation to the sacrificer. When the *yūpa* itself is made to represent the initiate in the mantra under consideration, it obviously has the symbolic potential implicit in it to suggest this idea by itself wherein the act of initiation would involve identification of the animal nature of the youth and purgation of it through the act of transformation.

There is a long distance to cover between the animal nature and the divine. While the animal is physical-vital, the divine is intellectual-spiritual. The body, the sense organs along with the sense-mind and the *prāṇa* form the axis of the animal nature while the divine nature has its mainstay in the intellectual-spiritual system of the human personality. Shifting the centre of the personality from the physical, vital and sensual to the intellectual-spiritual is a task as arduous as any and needs therefore utmost effort and care on the part of the individual as well as the teacher concerned. It is equivalent to those required in the transformation of the wood of the wilderness into the *yūpa* of the sacrifice representing the aspiration for the Divine.

Tapas

Tapas is one of the key words used in the Vedas. It denotes a certain device by means of which great tasks are accomplished. We find in the Veda not only seers practising *tapas* and achieving things surprising but also the Divine itself taking recourse to it for the accomplishment of the act of creation.

The word *tapas* is formed out of the root *tap*, to heat. It, therefore, should naturally denote some sort of heating. Needless to point out that fire is the basic means of heating anything. There is no doubt about it that the Vedic seer was fully cognisant of this fact. This is evident from direct association of *tapas* with *Agni* in very many mantras. In one of the *Atharvavedic* mantras, for instance, *Agni* has been prayed to provide heat to the extent as it be comfortable to the body without being excessive. If he wants to be excessive at all in his burning capacity, the seer suggests, it may be displayed in forests and elsewhere on the earth as well as inside the earth.[1]

Taking note of the burning capacity of fire in this way, he intends to make use of it in getting rid of elements of nuisance value in the society such as enemies, abusers and users of harsh words as well as of diseases.[2] In another mantra he prays to *Agni* to use his *tapas* against him who is inimical towards mankind and whom the latter detests.[3]

This, however, is not to bear out that there is any necessary sequence in the use of the word *tapas* in the Veda from the physical to the psychic or spiritual through the process of interiorisation. This is clear from the fact that while in the *Atharvavedic* mantra quoted above the reference is to external enemies desired by the seer to be heated and burnt by *Agni*, there is another mantra in the *Ṛgveda* in which the enemy wished to be burnt by *Agni* lies hidden somewhere or indeed inside the seer himself and seeks to do harm to him lying secure there. For the sake of getting that enemy burnt, the seer invokes the greatest heating power of *Agni* by addressing the god as the best of the heaters as well as possessed of the

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1 शं तप॒ माति तप॒ो अग्ने॒ मा त॒न्वं 1 तपः।
वनेषु शुष्मो अस्तु ते पृथि॒व्यामस्तु यद्धरः।। *AV.XVIII.2.36*

2 विश्वा अ॒ग्नेऽप दहारा॒तीयेभिस्तपो॒भि॒रदहो जरुथम्।
प्र नि॒स्व॒रं चातय॒स्वामीवाम्।। *RV.VII.1.7*

3 अग्ने॒ यत् ते॒ तप॒स्तेन॒ तं प्रति तप॒ यो॒ऽस्मान् द्वेष्टि॒ यं व॒यं द्वि॒ष्मः। *AV.II.19.1*

power of heating.[4] Similarly, in another mantra, seer *Viśvāmitra* prays to the same deity to burn the internal enemies as well as those who believe only in hoarding and thus betray their ignorance.[5]

Agni invoked in the capacity of one who burns the internal enemies does not remain the physical fire in the same way as the internal enemy is not any external agency. As has already been stated at some length, *Agni* in the Veda right from the very beginning has been conceived as the basic universal force working as consciousness inside and as fire outside. As such, when the enemy is there outside, he will very well be effective in removing him by means of his physical heat. But this cannot hold good in the case the enemy is internal. In the latter case, he will have to be conceived as operative in the form of consciousness, rather as the power of intelligence and discrimination.

In this case, *tapas* also will not remain just heating the body in the proximity of fire, no matter be it sacrificial. It will necessarily have to be some sort of psychic heating required for removing the inner coldness of lethargy as well as darkness of ignorance. It is against this background that seer *Atharvan* prays to *Agni* to help him and persons of his kind in advancement of their act of *tapas* in its primary as well as secondary phase by means of his own *tapas* so that they may make best use of their learning by getting their lives prolonged and wisdom enriched.[6] The primary form of *tapas* is obviously the heating of the psyche in the fire of essential consciousness so as to make it luminous like the red-hot piece of iron while the secondary form of it is the application of the same luminosity in chastening and ennobling the mode of behaviour by having control over the mind and the organs of sense and action. It is through such *tapas* alone that one can expect to have his life prolonged and his wisdom enriched and enlarged.

That *tapas* has to do something fundamentally with the inmost being of the aspirant and not just with his body is evident from one of the mantras seen by *Damana*, the son of *Yama* in the *Ṛgveda*. In this mantra, the seer

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4 यो नः सनुत्यो अभिदासदग्ने यो अन्तरो मित्रमहो वनुष्यात्।
तमजरेभि वृषभिस्तव स्वैस्तपा तपिष्ठ तपसा तपस्वान्।। *RV. VI.5.4*

5 तपो ष्वग्ने अन्तरं अमित्रान् तपा शंसमररुषः परस्य।
तपो वसो चिकितानो अचित्तान् वि ते तिष्ठन्तामजरा अयासः।। *Ibid., III.18.2.*

6 यदग्ने तपसा तप उपतप्यामहे तपः।
प्रियाः श्रुतस्य भूयास्मायुष्मन्तः सुमेधसः।। *AV. VII.61.1*

prays to *Agni* to bring glow of *tapas* by means of his splendour as well as flame to that portion of the human personality which is unborn and is, therefore, indestructible.[7] What a travesty of facts that *Griffith* has translated *ajobhāgah* in the mantra as "*Thy portion is the goat.*" Had goat been intended and sought to be burnt by the flame of fire, what would have remained which *Agni* is prayed in the second part of the mantra to take along with him to the higher world of the doers of noble deeds.[8] As a matter of fact, the Vedic seer is fully conscious of the perishability of the human personality in that portion of it which is formed out of the material drawn from the physical. But, at the same, time he is also conscious of that portion which is derived from the Divine and hence is considered as unborn and indestructible. Here in this mantra reference has been made to that very portion along with the prayer addressed to *Agni* to make that portion restored to its original glow through the *tapas* of him.

It is in this sense that *tapas* has closely been associated with *dīkṣā*, initiation. In the *Atharvaveda* there is a complete hymn addressed to gods such as *Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Ćandra, Soma, Indra, Apas* and *Brahman* and mentions *dikṣā* and *tapas* as the means by taking resort to which the knowers of *Brahman* are said to reach the world of highest beatitude.[9] Similarly in another mantra of the same *Samhitā* it has been observed that the seers aspiring to attain to the heaven or the heavenly glow in ancient past took resort to *tapas* and *dikṣā*.[10] The close association of *tapas* and *dikṣā* among themselves and with *Agni* is also evident from *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's* statement that *tapas* is *Agni* on the one hand and *dīkṣā* on the other.[11] *Dīkṣā* is the initiation into the higher knowledge of the Self and the Reality kept preserved by the long tradition of seers while *tapas* is the means by the application of which that knowledge is realised practically within oneself. If initiation is telling the student by the teacher that any piece of iron will become red when it will be heated sufficiently in the fire, *tapas* is making the practical of that statement by putting a piece of iron actually in fire, with this difference, however, that while the student of science makes the experiment on a particular piece of iron, the student of spirituality makes it on himself. The latter's

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7 अजोभागस्तपसा तं तपस्व तं ते शोचिस्तपतु तं ते अर्चिः। *RV.X.16.4*

8 यास्ते शिवास्तन्वो जातवेदस्ताभिर्वहैनं सुकृतामुलोकम्। *op.cit.*

9 यत्र ब्रह्मविदो यान्ति दीक्षया तपसा सह।
अग्निर्मा तत्र नयत्वग्निर्मेधा दधातु मे। अग्नये स्वाहा। *AV.XIX.43.1.*

10 भद्रमिच्छन्त ऋषयः स्वर्विदस्तपो दीक्षामुपनिषेदुरग्रे। *Ibid., XIX.41.1.*

11 तपो वा अग्निस्तपो दीक्षा। *Śat. Brah.III.4.3.2.*

experiment makes his inner being aglow with the transparency of understanding as well as curiosity to probe further into the matter concerned. This is evident from the Upanişadic sages like *Varuṇa* and *Pippalāda*, etc., asking their pupils such as *Bhṛgu, Satyakāma*, etc., to undergo *tapas* along with the observance of continence, faith, study, liberality, straightforwardness, non-violence and truth so as to be able to know higher things. *Tapas* is by no means a certain course of austerity undertaken in blind faith in the assurance of attaining to something beatific in future, possibly in life after death. It, on the contrary, is introversion to oneself and restoring oneself to its original luminous form like the gold restored to its original brightness by being put in the fire.

The association of *Agni* with *tapas* is both, actual and analogical. It is analogical inasmuch as, though belonging to entirely different planes of reality that is the physical and the psychic, the fire and *tapas* resemble each other in bringing glow to their respective objects. The actuality of the association, on the other hand, lies in the Vedic seer's vision of fire as operating on both the planes, the physical and the psychic. Acceptance of this twofold role of *Agni* in the vision of the seer has given birth to and sustained the institution of sacrifice while appreciation of the analogical relationship between *Agni* and the psychic phenomena has materialised into the promotion of the device of *tapas*. A certain amount of physicality can be conceded to the phenomenon of *tapas* also no doubt, such as in what is known subsequently as *pañćāgni tapas*, but the Vedic and Upanişadic *tapas* is much more of the psychic than of the physical nature. If the physical fire has to play any role in it, that is only due to it presenting the best possible analogical resemblance to what happens with the psyche as a result of the practice of *tapas*.

It is particularly on account of the analogical usage that the case of symbolism of *tapas* arises. If *tapas* were to mean simply heating of the body, as it happens partly at least in the *pañćāgni vrata*, there would not have been anything symbolic in it, the whole thing being plainly realistic. As distinct from it, when the physical happens to be used to suggest to something non-physical, there emerges the proper case for symbolism. As the psychic process started and run by the act of *tapas* results in bringing glow to the psychic being, like actual heating bringing similar glow to any piece of metal, it is sought to be symbolised by the actual heating. Failure to appreciate this point in the style of the seer results in all sorts of gross mistakes in the understanding of the Vedic texts and the Vedic culture as a whole, as is illustrated by *Griffith's* translation of *aja* in the mantra quoted above as "*goat*".

The symbolic nature of *tapas* in the Veda, however, gains still more clarity if we take into consideration its application in matters cosmogonic. One clear instance of it is the first mantra of the famous *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn. In this mantra, *Ṛta* and *Satya* are said to have emerged out of an all-encompassing *tapas* followed by the emergence of night and turbulent ocean respectively.[12] *Ṛta* being the metaphysical principle of ordered dynamism underlying the process of creation of all sorts including the psychic and the mental as well as the physical, *tapas* as its source cannot be physical by any stretch of imagination or canon of logic. It must rather be absolutely different from the phenomenon of burning or heating. There is no doubt about it that in the modern physics the principle of heat has been determined as the primary cause of creation by way of conceiving the singularity of the Big Bang to have occurred with the primeval ball of fire due to it having been excessively hot and dense. But in spite of all its primeval standing and singularity, the primeval ball of fire cannot be taken to have caused the beginning of all the beginnings of the act of creation. It must pre-suppose time for its duration in which it was existing prior to the explosion, no matter howsoever short. So must have been the case with space it would have occupied before the singularity would have taken place. If time and space are precluded from the scenario prior to the explosion, it must be pointed out that the concept of time-space involved in the theory of Big Bang is too inadequate to explain anything beyond the physical which obviously cannot be taken as the upper limit of the being. Beyond the physical, as per the hymn under consideration, there are, if not also what are indicated as *Samudra* and *Rātri*, at least *Satya* and *Rta* mobilising, directing and guiding the becoming of the Being.

When *Ṛta* and *Satya* themselves are said to have been born of the all-embracing *tapas* in the beginning of the creation, this *tapas* naturally should have been undertaken prior to their birth. As such, it must be purely metaphysical undertaken by the most primeval Being. The latter point is left without any further elaboration on it obviously owing to it lying beyond human understanding in the same way as subsequently the great Buddha kept silent when confronted with questions of this magnitude. In the Rgvedic hymn of creation some attempt has been made to circumscribe that most primeval situation by recounting it as the state of things when the One was existing all alone on its own or alternatively

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12 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत।
ततो रात्र्यजायत ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः।। *RV.X.190.1.*

when that One was enshrouded in densest possible darkness or ocean of inconscience, which, however, in spite of all its comprehensiveness, proved to be only a semblance of covering seemingly enclosing within it the colossal One. It is this colossal One which, the mantra points out, manifested itself by means of *tapas.*[13] Darkness, water, etc., used in this account are symbolic suggesting to things of metaphysical nature. Since the corresponding metaphysical principles are too subtle to describe, these tangible objects are used to give some idea of them. This is evident from the last two mantras of the hymn where all that has been said in the rest of the mantras has been questioned as a matter of fact.[14] In view of this metaphysical nature of things involved in the account, the *tapas* undergone by the Supreme so as to produce *Ṛta* and *Satya* cannot be taken in any physical sense at all.

How the Vedic seer is prone to translate into allegorical and tangible form what he evidently knows to be too subtle to recount otherwise, is obvious from the Atharvavedic account of the Supreme in relationship to *tapas, Satya, Ṛta,* etc., in a hymn seen by *Atharvan.* Conceiving of the Supreme as a pillar, *Skambha,* on account of its all-sustaining role, it has been questioned in the opening mantra of the hymn as to what that portion of it is where lies *tapas*, and what those portions are where lie *Ṛta, vrata, śraddhā* and *satya.*[15] Since in the tangible portion of the reality things very often involve heating prior to their formation, the seer makes use of the latter in the understanding of the Supreme also particularly in its role in the emergence of the world with this difference, however, that while in the tangible world the smith creates implements etc., by heating a certain metal other than himself, here at the starting point of the creation, the Creator having nothing else to get heated, offers himself to the heat just like an ascetic heating his body in sun so as to develop his sense of endurance besides getting himself mentally and physically purified. As the *Skambha* in itself has been presupposed as the ultimate source of all, its *tapas*, though a sheer process of heating of some sort, has had to be assigned a tangible place in the imaginary body of it. Kindred is the case

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13 न मृत्युरासीदमृतं न तर्हि न रात्र्या अह्न आसीत् प्रकेतः।
आनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकं तस्माद्धान्यन्न परः किं चनास।।
तम आसीत् तमसा गूलहमग्रे ऽ प्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम्।
तुच्छ्येनाभ्वपिहितं यदासीत् तपसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम्।।*Ibid., X.129.2-3*

14 को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचत् कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः।*Ibid., 129.6*

15 कस्मिन्नंगे तपो अस्याधि तिष्ठति कस्मिन्नंग ऋतमस्याध्याहितम्।
क्व व्रतं क्व श्रद्धास्य तिष्ठति कस्मिन्नंगे सत्यमस्य प्रतिष्ठितम्।*AV.X.7.1.*

with *Rta, vrata, satya* and *śraddhā* also. Being necessary components in the constitution or working of the world, they had to be traced back to the ultimate source of the creation conceived here in the form of *Skambha*. This is what the seer means when on behalf of his student he raises the question regarding the identity of the *Skambha* in which having overpowered the self-same Being, *tapas* creates the possibility of the subsequent creation as guided by *Ṛta*, imbued with *śraddhā* and being modulated on the primeval water.[16]

That the *tapas* to which is ascribed the creatorship of the Creator is some sort of effort at brooding over himself on his part is evident from another mantra occurring in the hymn subsequently. In this mantra, He is said to have manifested himself by the toil of his *tapas* in the form of all the universes.[17]

In a certain sense it can also be surmised that the attribution of *tapas* to the Creator is the result of projection of his own state of being at the highest plane of his *sādhanā* by the seer. No doubt the latter has to put in stupendous effort at self-concentration to rise above his vital and mental being and come to realise the Supreme. All this effort is *tapas* because it is like the ignition of the Self. As a result of this *tapas,* the inner darkness gets removed like the outer in the face of the light. With the removal of the inner darkness, the consciousness becomes crystal clear and enables the seer to have a glimpse of Him, the most worshipable, within himself. This consciousness bearing the image of the Supreme within it is so comprehensive as to encompass everything within it, which indeed is the pre-condition of being able to reflect the Transcendent within it. Such consciousness is imaged out as the ocean with unbounded expansion and unfathomable depth. This is precisely what is suggested by another mantra of the hymn by describing the Supreme as a great *Yaksa* lying in the midst of the creation and coming to view in course of *tapas* as lying, as it were, at the rock bottom of the oceanic water.[18] This *salila* is the oceanic water of consciousness realised in its fullness by the *tapas* of meditation practised by the seer. As *tapas* plays the vital role in making the earthly creature establish his relationship approximating identity with

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16 यत्र तपः पराकम्य व्रतं धारयत्युत्तरम्।
ऋतं च यत्र श्रद्धा चापो ब्रह्म समाहिताः।
स्कम्भं तं ब्रूहि कतमः स्विदेव सः।। *Ibid., X.7.11*

17 यः श्रमात् तपसो जातो लोकान्सर्वान्त्समानृशे। *Ibid.,X.7.36*

18 महद् यक्षं भुवनस्य मध्ये तपसि क्रान्तं सलिलय पृष्ठे। *Ibid., X.7.38*

the Supreme ontologically, it comes to be understood as to have played the same role from the side of the Creator in the creation of the world out of him. Thus the symbol of *tapas* as simply heat takes another jump to come to represent the creative act of the Creator having risen from the cognitive effort of the individual to realise the Supreme as lying at the centre of the creation. It would be a farce to think of this *tapas* in any physical term. It is metaphysical out and out and has been conceived of by transferring or extending the symbol from the individual aspirant to the Creator of the world.

It is in this sense that we can explain properly the coincidence of the *Ātman* with the Supreme in regard to *tapas* as well as other characteristic features such as oneness, beauty, greatness, excellence, pervasiveness and truth as recounted in a mantra addressed to *Adhyātma* and seen by seer *Atharvan.*[19]

The seer's inclining to the symbolic way of expression is evident in attributing the same *tapas* to *Indra* by identifying him with the Supreme. There is a Rgvedic mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* and *Jamadagni* in which *Indra* has been prayed to fetch abundance of wealth in heroism by virtue of having himself won the heaven by means of *tapas.*[20] Here *Indra* comes simply in the role of a deity but as having undergone *tapas* for winning the heaven. This feature of his character assumes the form of legends in the *Purāṇas* showing him as envious of seers, particularly *Viśvāmitra*, one of the seers of this mantra himself. That is one sort of development on this vision. Besides it, however, there is another one coming in the *Atharvaveda* in which it has been observed by seer *Atharvan* that *Indra* is the tangible form of *Skambha* itself and has encompassed within him *tapas* as well as everything else including *Ṛta* and the universes controlled by *Ṛta.*[21] This account of *Indra* as possessed of *tapas* in the capacity of being identical to the Supreme Being bears out how it was through *tapas* that he was realised particularly in these roles. Otherwise, the seer would not have associated him with *tapas* and *via* that with the Supreme Being who has been said to have created everything through *tapas.*

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19 तदेकमभवत् तल्ललामभवत् तन्महदभवत् तज्ज्येष्ठमभवत् तद् ब्रह्माभवत्।
तत् तपोऽभवत् तत् सत्यमभवत् तत् तेन प्राजायत। *Ibid.,XV.1.3*

20 त्वं रयिं पुरूवीरामु नस्कृधि त्वं तपः परितप्याजयः स्वः। *RV.X.167.1*

21 इन्द्रे लोका इन्द्रे तप इन्द्रेऽध्यृतमाहितम्।
इन्द्रं त्वा वेद प्रत्यक्षं स्कम्भे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्। *AV.X.7.30*

In regard to the relationship between *Agni* and *tapas*, there is a pertinent passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* which needs to be addressed to here. In this passage, it has been stated that the Creator was alone in the beginning before any creation took place. He began to think how he might procreate. He put in effort in the form of *tapas*. Thus he gave birth to *Agni* out of his mouth.[22] Birth of *Agni* from the mouth of the Creator practising *tapas* bears out amply well the metaphysical nature of the latter, as it refers to a state of things when *Agni* was yet to be born. In the same passage it has also been stated that the consumptive nature of *Agni* is due to it having been born from the mouth of the Creator.[23] The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* makes a significant addition to this idea by describing *Agni* as the mouth of the gods on the one hand and as the *tapas* and glory of *Viṣṇu* on the other.[24] Since *Viṣṇu* is the highest of the gods and somewhat parallel to *Prajāpati* , it is quite in accordance with the *Śatapatha 's* passage referred to above that *Agni* has been stated to be a manifestation of the highest glory of *Viṣṇu* through *tapas*. It is obvious from this statement that the real stuff is the glory of *Viṣṇu* and that *tapas* is a means of its manifestation. When the glory gets manifested as a result of the deity's undergoing the course of *tapas*, *Agni* is born as the mouth of gods and consumer of everything by means of its heat. This idea goes very well with the Vedic accounts ascribing the creation of the world to the Supreme through his *tapas*.

The relationship of the *tapas* of the Supreme with that of the individual gets explained precisely by an Atharvavedic mantra addressed to *Rohita,* a symbolic form of the Supreme Being. In this mantra it has been stated that *Rohita,* as a *tapasvin*, ascended the heaven by means of his *tapas* and at the same time enters the womb of the mother and gets reborn. Thus he is the lord of the gods on the one hand and the inmost being of the individual on the other.[25] It is in this dual role that he undergoes on the one hand the creative *tapas* resulting in the creation of the cosmos and on the other the cognitive *tapas* from within the individual leading to the cognisance of the same *tapas* lying at the root of the creation. Here

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22 प्रजापतिर्ह वा इदमग्र एक एवास। स ऐक्षत कथं नु प्रजायेयेति।
सोऽश्राम्यत। स तपो ऽ तप्यत। सो ऽग्निमेव मुखाज्जनयाञ्चके। *Sat.Brah.II.2.4.1*

23 तद्यदेनं मुखादजनयत तस्माद। *Op.cit.*

24 अग्निर्मुखं प्रथमो देवतानामग्निश्च विष्णोस्तप उत्तमं महः। *Ait.Brah.I.4*

25 रोहितो दिवमारुहत् तपसा तपस्वी।
स योनिमैति स उ जायते पुनः।
स देवानामधिपतिर्बभूव।। *AV.XIII.2.25*

the metaphysical comes to meet the psychological on an equal footing according thus ontological substantiality to the *tapas* of the seer. *Rohita's* rising to the heaven by means of *tapas* does not mean so much anything actual to that effect as it is suggestive of the transformatory effect of it on the human psyche to the extent of the latter's transpoṚtation from the earthly to the heavenly, so to say. Really speaking, what the seer means to suggest here is that if one undertakes to *tapas* in the right earnest, he is sure to get as much transformed in his consciousness as is the distance from the earth to the heaven. To apply this formula to the interpretation of a mantra addressed to *Indra* as a *tapasvin*, for instance, we may take his winning the heaven by means of the performance of *tapas* as illustrative of the possibility of the seer attaining to the divine consciousness by means of his own *tapas*, if, of course, graced by the benefaction of the deity supervening that consciousness. The honey-sweet Soma being offered to the deity by the seer is indeed symbolic of the supernal felicity attending on that consciousness.[26]

The Vedic seers were deeply involved in the act of *tapas*. The latter indeed was the prominent means available to them by the use of which they brought transformation to their consciousness to the extent as to be able to dive deep into the mystery of the world and life and see the mantras laden with wisdom pertaining to that mystery. This is evident not only from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka's* well known observation quoted by *Yāska* in his *Nirukta* in connection with the derivation of the word *rsi* to the effect that the seers are called *rsi* because while they were engaged in *tapas*, the mantras embodying the eternal wisdom rushed to them automatically,[27] but also directly from Vedic mantras themselves. In a mantra seen by *Yamī*, for instance, the seers are described as having thousands of ways of understanding and as guardians of the sun by virtue of being born of *tapas* as also being engaged in *tapas*.[28] Thousands of ways of understanding signifies infinite potentiality of knowledge which the seers had got opened to them through the practice of *tapas*. The sun, on the other hand, stands for the Supreme Being whose protection by seers means serving the cause of his admittance in the society lest the latter might deviate from the proper course and objective of life. In another

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26 तुभ्येदमिन्द्र परिषिच्यते मधु त्वं सुतस्य कलशस्य राजसि।
त्वं रयिं पुरुवीरामु नस्कृधि त्वं तपः परितप्याजयः स्वः।। *RV.X.167.1*

27 तद्यदेनांस्तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्म स्वयम्भ्वभ्यानर्षत् तदृषीणामृषित्वमिति विज्ञायते। *Taittiriya Aran.II.9*

28 सहस्रणीथाः कवयो ये गोपायन्ति सूर्यम्।
ऋषीन् तपस्वतो यम तपोजां अपि गच्छतात्। *RV.X.154.5*

mantra seen by her, the seers are said to have become invincible and made themselves worthy of being elevated to heaven through rigorous *tapas*.[29] In view of the transformatory effect of *tapas* on the human psyche, the *Atharvaveda* also describes the seers as born of *tapas*.[30] This birth understandably is of the same sort as initiation is supposed to be the second birth of the twice-born, *dvija*.

The human psyche, indeed, is a multi-tier system operating on diverse planes, such as the sensory, vital, mental, and spiritual all working mostly in discordance to one another and at even cross purposes resulting in diffusion and diminution of the valuable power of understanding. *C.G. Jung*, the eminent psychologist has suggested individuation as a way out of this universally prevailing pathology under which the conscious, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious as major components of the inner being are brought together under the reign of the Self serving as the common centre of all instead of allowing all of them remain dissociated from one another owing to the divisive role of the ego as the centre of only the conscious and yet masquerading as the centre of all. His idea of individuation, however, is very much notional inasmuch as the psychologist could not develop any precise method for making it practical in life. We can understand the significance of the Vedic seer's *tapas* if we compare and contrast it with Jung's device of individuation. While the latter is just a notional integration of the said components of the psyche, *tapas* is the heat generated by the one-pointedness of the inner being melting all the components of the latter, joining them with one another substantially and making them aglow with the light of the Self, the real representative of the Supreme Being having accepted the human psyche as its centre of operation. As such, *tapas* not only forges perfect oneness amongst the diverse components of the inner being of man but also brings the realisation of oneness of the individual with the totality of the reality including other individuals, the universe as a whole besides the Transcendent. It is illustrated by the son of *Gāthin* having become *Viśvāmitra*, one friendly to all, and to have reached beatific house of *Indra* by means of perseverance, *tapas* and observance of the eternal principles of life, as the *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad* tells us.[31]

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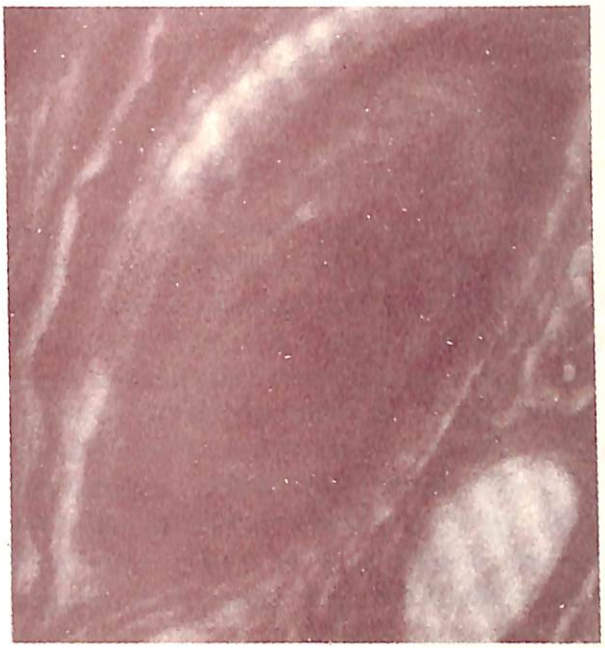
29 तपसा ये अनाधृष्यास्तपसा ये स्वर्ययुः।
तपो ये चक्रिरे महस्तांश्चिदेवापि गच्छतात्। *Ibid., X.154.2*

30 ऋषीनार्षेयांस्तपसोऽधि जातान् ब्रह्मौदने सुहवा जोहवीमि। *AV.XI.1 26*

31 तद्ध विश्वामित्रः श्रमेण तपसा व्रतचर्येणेन्द्रस्य प्रियं धामोपजगाम। *Jaim.Up.III.3.7*



Spinning and Weaving

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Some historians are under the impression that the art of spinning and weaving was introduced to India by foreign invaders during the middle ages. While labouring hard with the thesis, strangely enough, they forget the paintings of *Ajantā* dating from the second century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. and the *Gāndhāra* sculptures of the Buddha of the same antiquity bearing out specimens of clothing of numerous kinds, colours and qualities. They also forget the court scene of the *Mahābhārata*, where, in spite of all his effort to disrobe *Draupadī*, *Dusśāsana* could not reach the other end of her garment. The princely clothes exchanged for burch by *Rāma, Lakşmaṇa* and *Sita* at the time of their departure to the forest, as recounted in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, also has remained outside the reach of these historians.

But to their still greater surprise, the history of spinning, weaving, and clothing in India dates as far back as the *Vedic Samhitās* themselves. These items had captured the imagination of the people so powerfully even at that stage of Indian history that the seers made copious use of them even symbolically. Figurative use of anything always follows its primary use. Indeed it acquired the capability of being used figuratively through its frequent use in actuality.

As regards the symbolic use of the act of spinning in a relatively simpler context, we may take, for example, a small mantra in the *Gāyatri* metre addressed to Soma. In *Griffith's* translation, the mantra reads as under:

"Thou, Soma, holdest wealth in kine which thou hast seized from niggard churls. Thou calledst forth the outspun thread."[1]

It means that *Soma* brings for himself wealth in kine wrested from the *Paṇis* and announces the spreading of the thread. Out of the jumble of ideas put together in this mantra what we literally at our best, as is evident from *Sāyaṇa's* explanation to some extent, can draw is that god Soma has captured from *Paṇis*, the notorious thieves, a herd of cows and

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1 त्वं सोम पणिभ्य आ वसु गव्यानि धारयः।
ततं तन्तुमचिकदः।। *RV.IX.22.7*

that he announces the spinning or spreading of the thread. Wresting of cows on the one hand and spinning of the thread on the other are two acts having little to do with each other. And yet they have been put together here so closely. Moreover, wresting of cows from *Paṇis* by *Soma* also has literally little understandable to offer. But if we go into the symbolism involved in the cryptic statement, we find a deeper meaning embedded in it.

To begin with, let us start with the basic assumption suggested literally by the mantra that spinning was not only known but very much popular at that time in India, so much so, of course, as to have been used in the mantra in regard to an act having little to do with *Soma* actually but for analogically. Here the obvious reference is to the process of purifying the *Soma* juice. The juice squeezed from the creeper was poured into a sieve made of wool. Being poured, it trickled down from the sieve like the thread spun out of wool or cotton with the help of the spindle. Thus at the back of the whole imagery lies the fact of spinning the thread out of the raw material, no matter be it wool or cotton. The imagery of this fact gets transferred to the spectacle of *Soma* juice trickling from the sieve, understandably owing to the wool having been used as the raw material in the making of both the sieve and the thread. The sound produced by the trickling of the juice may be supposed to have formed the basis of the idea of *Soma's* announcement of the spreading of the thread. But this is just the surface of the real meaning. To take the trickling sound as *Soma's* announcement of the spreading of the thread in itself indicates to the depth of the meaning intended to be communicated here. That meaning lies in the conversion of the amorphous lump of wool or cotton into the well organised continuity of the thread. It is this organised or channelised continuity of the flow of the blocked stagnancy of the original stuff which forms the real theme of the legend of *Paṇis* and rescuing of the herd of cows from their possession. That way, extraction of the *Soma* juice from the creeper in itself is an act symbolic of rescuing the cows from the cave of the *Paṇis*.

Thus, in the imagery involved in this mantra, the act of spinning the thread out of the lump of wool gets applied to the extraction of juice out of the creeper and its purification in the sieve and lastly to the phenomenon of blocked stagnancy of Matter getting to flow out of it in the form of Energy, Life and Mind. It is having come to this end that we can find the real point of coherence between the announcement of the act of spinning on the one hand and releasing of cows from the captivity of *Paṇis* on the other by one and the same god *Soma*.

Sāyaṇa takes *tantu* here in this mantra in the sense of sacrifice and not unjustifiably. That indeed is another area of the symbolic use of thread in the Veda. Sacrifice is a process in which numerous objects of diverse nature are used at different stages so as to result in a meaningful, well-defined and coherent series of definite and end-oriented acts. It is the process of coherence in discordance and, as such, an apt symbol of the process of the world. Now, if sacrifice symbolises the process of the world on the one hand, it in itself gets symbolised by the spectacle of spinning and weaving on the other. This is evident not only in the mantra quoted above but also and much more clearly and elaborately in a mantra seen by *Yajña Prājāpatya* himself. He understands the world as a sacrifice and that also in its turn as a piece of cloth undergoing the process of weaving with the involvement of a multitude of threads from all around in the form of divine acts hundred and one in number. This cloth is being woven by Fathers who have already passed away. Their act of weaving of the cloth, however, is turned towards the past. But at the same time they are supposed to direct we living beings to weave the same cloth towards the future. Thus, the world, according to the seer, is an infinitely long piece of cloth in the process of being woven on both its sides, towards the past by the Fathers and towards the future by their progeny.[2]

In yet another mantra the spinning of the thread of sacrifice has been characterised as the best of all possible acts. Besides spinning, however, another symbol used for sacrifice in the mantra has been drawn from the spectacle of the flowing river. This symbol is suggested by the involvement of *Soma* in the sacrifice. Because of its flow in a continuity, the river has come to symbolise the continuity of the flow of *Soma* in the sacrifice representing the process of the world. Thus if the process of the world is a supremely intelligent act of spinning of the thread of actions involved in its being, it is also at the same time a river of *Soma* flowing continuously and providing pleasure, joy and delight to those involved in the act of spinning. Both the strings of the continuity of action and enjoyment are running parallel to each other under the symbolic forms of the act of sacrificing and taking joy in the act of drinking *Soma*. On account of taking care of both the action and the enjoyment equally well and homogeneously, the symbol of sacrifice has been considered as the best conceivable.[3]

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2 यो यज्ञो विश्वतस्तन्तुभिस्तत एकशतं देवकर्मेभिरायतः।
इमे वयन्ति पितरो य आययुः प्र वयाप वयेत्यासते ततेः।। *Ibid.X.130.1*

3 तन्तुं तन्वानमुत्तममनु प्रवत आशत। उतेदमुत्तमाय्यम्।। *Ibid. IX.22.6*

In yet another mantra seen by *Samvarta Angirasa*, sacrifice again has been conceived as a thread which fetches nourishing food to the sacrificer. It is with this understanding that he invites mankind to undertake the performance of sacrifice.[4] Thread here may very well stand for the piece of cloth which is supposed to have enclosed within it the nourishing food for the sacrificer.

In another mantra seen by *Atri*, sacrifice once more has been conceived as a thread made of as many as three strands. The strands have usually been taken to refer to the three pressings of *Soma*, i.e., the morning, the mid-day and the evening. That is an easy way out shown and firmly established by the medieval Indian commentators including *Sāyaṇa*. But consideration over the real ideas embodied in the mantra suggests to something deeper than sheer ritualism which in a way is just an imitation of that deeper value or function. Here *Soma* is said to clothe himself with the rays of the sun and spread his thread threefold so that he may be found out, experienced or understood as per the status of each of the strands. This he is doing, the mantra continues, by way of carrying out the fresh imperatives of *Ṛta*, the dynamics of the Eternal. In this way, the mantra further observes, he, the husband of beautiful damsels, reaches the spot sanctified by their presence.[5] Thus the rays of the sun are said to provide *Soma* with the physical appearance while he himself is supposed to spread his thread in three strands for the experience or cognisance of the beings as per their respective locations. *Soma* as the husband of beautiful damsels symbolises the sources of delight characterised by creativity. Over all, the mantra signifies that behind the physical lies the dynamics of the Eternal serving constantly as an imperative to bring out the wealth of creative delight to the reach of beings living on diverse planes of existence. The three-stranded thread stands for the universe including the triplicity of the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven in the Vedic terminology and for the three *guṇas*, namely *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* as admitted particularly in the *Sāmkhya* tradition. Thus, the threads spread by *Soma* are really the principles of *Ṛta* in accordance with which the delight of the Reality is being shaped particularly by the rays of the sun. Soma and the beautiful damsels are the bearers of that delight creatively.

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4 पितुभृतो न तन्तुमित् सुदानवः प्रति दध्मो यजामसि। *Ibid. X.172.3.*

5 स सूर्यस्य रश्मिभिः परिव्यत तन्तुं तन्वानस्त्रिवृतं यथा विदे।
नयन्नृतस्य प्रशिषो नवीयसीः पतिर्जनीनामुपयाति निष्कृतम्। । *Ibid. IX.86.32,*

That spinning and weaving have a certain much deeper meaning to communicate in the Veda gets confirmation from several other mantras including a few seen by *Vasistha*. In one of his mantras, the seer observes that seers of his level of consciousness move around in the creation in all its infinite varieties of manifestations secretly by means of the intuitions arising in their hearts and conceive of the physical bodies as clothes woven by them. With this deep understanding of the nature of creation they get so much delighted as if they were dwelling in the proximity of *Apsarasas*, the heavenly damsels.[6] The fourth mantra hence onward in the hymn makes the symbolisation of the physical body by the act of weaving still clearer using almost the same words and images. Here *Vasistha* has been described as endowed with intuitive power and by virtue of that power, as the intimate knower of both the worlds. On account of this knowledge, he is also said to have become limitlessly liberal. He, according to the mantra, has further woven around him the cloth whose threads have been spread by *Yama*. His real origin, therefore, lies not in the thread or the cloth woven out of it but in the heavenly damsel, *Apsaras*.[7]

When we compare the contents of all these three mantras referred to above, what we find is that what has been referred to as the secret intuiting of the heart in the ninth mantra of the hymn and by virtue of which the seers have been said to move amidst the boundless manifestations of the world, has been restated in the twelfth one as the deeper understanding of both the worlds by the seer by virtue of which he has become immensely liberal in his outlook. It bears out the equivalence of free movement of the seer amidst innumerable manifestations of the world with his deeper understanding of both the worlds. Obviously we can draw the conclusion that when the seer talks of movement, he really intends to suggest symbolically to psychic understanding rather than to sheer physical movement. Similarly, what has been referred to in the first one of these three mantras as the cloth woven by the rays of the sun, the same thing has been described in the second mantra as the thread spread by *Yama* and being woven by the *Vasisthas* sitting in the proximity of the *Apsaras* and in the third mantra as being desired to be woven by *Vasistha* after being born of the *Apsaras*. The conclusion is clear. It implies

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6 त इन्निण्यं हृदयस्य प्रकेतैः सहस्रवल्शमभिसंचरन्ति।
यमेन ततं परिधिं वयन्तोऽप्सरस उप सेदुर्वसिष्ठाः।। *Ibid., VII.33.9*

7 सप्रकेत उभयस्य प्रविद्वान् त्सहस्रदान उत वा सदानः।
यमेन ततं परिधिं वयिष्यन्नप्सरसः परि जज्ञे वसिष्ठः।। *Ibid., VII.33.12*

equivalence of the sun with *Yama* and of the birth of *Vasistha* from the *Apsaras* with his dwelling in close proximity with her. This last sense explains very well Soma's going to the sanctified abode of the beautiful damsels as recounted in the first one of these three mantras. The equivalence of *Yama* with the sun in regard to the spreading of the warp on which the cloth is being woven by *Vasistha* suggests to the physicality, mechanical fixity and mortality of the physical frame we are endowed with. Similarly there is perfect equivalence between *Vasistha's* birth from the *Apsaras* and his living in the proximity of her. This is explicable in terms of the child living in the proximity of its mother. As distinct from it, however, *Soma* in the first mantra has been described as the husband of the heavenly damsels playing with them creatively under the imperative of *Ṛta*. This distinction is quite understandable. *Vasistha* is a human being while *Soma* is divine. The human is a child of the heavenly damsel in regard to his spirit wearing the garb of physicality provided by the sun, the author of this part of the physical world. Being under the control of *Yama*, this physical coil is mortal, perishable and more or less mechanically fixed, while man's spirit is free to move anywhere in the world by means of its intuitive power. It is how the divine spirit comes to put on the vesture of physicality. Since *Soma* is the active agent behind the whole affair of unification of the divine with the physical, he is said in the first one of these mantras to have clothed himself, as it were, with the three-stranded thread in the form of the rays of the sun.

The deeply symbolic use of the acts of spinning and weaving is also evident from one of the hymns of *Bharadvāja* addressed to *Vaiśvānara*. The seer begins with contemplation on the nature of time as passing in the alternation of day and night addressed significantly as the black day and the white day. The very use of the term *ahas* for day and night both pointing to the difference between them through the use of adjectives bears out the seer's capacity to see time as a continuous process beyond the periodic demarcations. The purpose of this hectic alternation of day and night in the midst of the heaven and the earth, the seer observes, becomes clear to him only when he comes to explore the mystery of *Agni* up to his cosmic essence, *Vaiśvānara*. When *Agni* gets explored to that extent, the whole ignorance disappears like anarchy coming to end at the advent of the king.[8]

This obviously suggests to the method the seer followed in his exploration

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8 अहश्च कृष्णमहरर्जुनं च वि वर्तेते रजसी वेद्याभिः ।
वैश्वानरो जायमानो न राजावातिरज्ज्योतिषाग्निस्तमांसि ।। *Ibid., VI.9.1*

of the mystery of the creation. As is evident also from the fourth and the fifth mantras of the hymn, the seer devoted himself to *Agni* not only in his external form but also as constituting the essence of the consciousness inside the human psyche. Through this two-pronged approach, he eventually discovers that *Agni* is all in all forming the essence of consciousness on the one hand and serving as the material cause of the universe on the other, in other words, as the subject inside and the object outside. This unification of so diametrically opposed principles as the subject and the object, which elsewhere in the world still remains almost totally unaccomplished, is indeed one of the most profound achievements of the Vedic seer, as is evident from the status the *mahāvākyas* came to be accorded subsequently in the *Upaniṣads*.

Having given an idea of his achievement so briefly and cryptically at the outset of the hymn, the seer reflects back to the limitations the human consciousness ordinarily is subjected to. Instead of imputing the ignorance to others to the exclusion of himself, he commits himself to the determination of the extent of the human limitations in this regard. It is at this point that he makes use of the symbol of spinning and weaving to give an idea of the human predicament in regard to knowledge of things in their essentials. Like *Dirghatamas* seeing the very essence of things in the form of *ekam sat* and yet posing himself as completely blind and incapable of seeing anything whatever, *Bharadvāja* also observes in the second mantra of the hymn that he knows neither the art of spinning nor that of weaving nor even what the rank and file of the soldiers of life are weaving out in the battlefield of the world. Thus the entire human undeRtaking under the sun has come to be symbolised by the seer as an act of spinning and weaving being engaged in simultaneously and exclusively by one and all without knowing as to what is the wool or cotton serving as the raw material of the act of spinning as also what this weaving is being done for. The inquiry into what and whereabouts of the raw material relates to the basic stuff out of which the creation has been worked out while the same in regard to the nature of the cloth suggests to the ultimate purpose of the hectic action undertaken by one and all in the world rather on the war-footing. Having no hope of the solution of his problem by any of his contemporaries, he shows himself to be in search of anyone of the sons of them who might provide him with proper solution to his problem. Such a son, if any, would be regarded, in his estimation, as by far worthier than his own father, howsoever distinguished otherwise.[9]

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9 नाहं तन्तुं न वि जनाम्योतुं॒ 1 न यं वयन्ति समरेऽतमानाः।
कस्य स्वित् पुत्र इह वक्त्वानि परो वदात्यवरेण पित्रा। *Ibid., VI.9.2*

Thus seeing no possibility of getting these problems solved purely on the human level, he takes resort to *Vaiśvānara* whom he worships in this world as *Agni*. Taking recourse to the same symbolism of spinning and weaving, he observes that that agency alone knows the whereabouts of the spinning and the weaving and therefore can tell us precisely what and what for they are, who is the protector of immortality above and though moving on the earth in a different capacity, continues to keep that supernal vision intact.[10]

By virtue of forming the material cause of the universe as well as being the consciousness obtaining in the world, *Agni* has been accorded the symbol of the thread of the universe as well as the spreader of the thread. In one of his mantras, the seer *Gaupāyana*, for instance, talks of *Agni* as a thread extending up to the gods as well as a means indispensable for the performance of sacrifice.[11] Needless to point out that *Agni* has been taken in the Veda as a messenger operating between the humans and the gods. How does he accomplish this task? Does he do so by moving physically between the earth and the heaven? The mantra under reference does away with the necessity of any such pre-supposition. It describes *Agni* as a thread extending from the earth to the heaven. Anticipating the present day position of communicating messages telegraphically and telephonically, the seer takes *Agni* as a wire spread between the two planes of being, the human and the divine.

This, however, is just the apparent view of things. Thread is symbolic of the interconnectedness of the physical and the spiritual or Matter and Spirit on essential grounds. Since it is *Agni* himself who assumes the form of the physical universe on the one hand that of the consciousness within the living beings on the other, he is very well capable of communicating messages from the physical to the spiritual or from the human to the divine and *vice versa*. That essential ground is the oneness of the Reality in the ultimate sense. *Ṛta* is the thread of this Reality. This thread projects things out of that Reality as well as binds them together. In view of its primeval position in the spectrum of the Reality, it has often been characterised in the mantras as *purvya*. Accordingly, in one of the mantras seen by *Nārada*, *Agni* has been prayed to come this way and go

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10 स इत् तन्तुं सं वि जानात्योतुं स वक्त्वान्यृतुथा वदाति।
य ईं चिकेतदमृतस्य गोपा अवश्चरन् परो अन्येन पश्यन्।। *Ibid., VI.9.3*

11 यो यज्ञस्य प्रसाधनस्तन्तुर्देवेष्वाततः।
तमाहुतं नशीमहि।। *Ibid., X.57.2*

that way and thus spread the primeval thread for real understanding.[12] Coming this way and going that way of *Agni* resulting particularly in spreading the primeval thread is a highly suggestive description. It indicates to the loom of the weaver which keeps on moving forward and backward between the two sides of the warp spread for weaving the cloth. In fact, it is by virtue of such a twofold movement of the loom taking along with it the woof that warp comes to take shape of the cloth. Thus if the ultimate Reality is the warp of the cloth of the universe, *Ṛta* is the woof taken up by *Agni* to weave out the cloth of creation. Interestingly enough, the ascription of this significant mantra to *Nārada* must have had a telling effect on the portrayal of sage *Nārada's* character subsequently in the post-Vedic era. What most probably would have happened is that the role of *Agni* as the messenger operating between humans and gods like the loom of the weaver envisioned in this mantra seen by one *Nārada* got transferred to this seer himself turning him out as a peculiar character forging dialogues and interactions between his two sorts of clients. Significantly enough, it is only in this hymn that *Nārada* occurs as a seer. This particular mantra, therefore, may very well be taken as the basis of his post-Vedic character wherein, besides being highly respected, he stands also very often denounced due to his role happening sometimes to take the shape of the double-dealer and hence getting equated with that of the weaver's loom which keeps going on from one side of the cloth to the other without having any standpoint anywhere. This character of *Nārada* begins to be reflected in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* itself where he, though a divine sage, is portrayed as a restless human notwithstanding his most comprehensive learning. In any case, this mantra takes the symbolism of spinning and weaving to the extent of the operation of the weaver's loom. This is highly significant from the historical viewpoint as indicated in the beginning.

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12 आ तू गहि प्र तु द्रव मत्स्वा सुतस्य गोमतः।
तन्तुं ततुष्व पूर्व्यं यथा विदे।। *Ibid., VIII.13.14*

11

How the thread of *Ṛta* conjoins the physical and the spiritual is brought out by another mantra seen by *Pavitra Angirasa*. According to him, the thread of *Ṛta* extends on the one side to the sieve used in cleansing *Soma* and on the other to the palate of the drinker of the *Soma*, both the human and the divine. Being poured into the sieve, it gets cleared of the straw, no doubt, but the sieve cannot know anything of the taste of *Soma*. It is only when the *Soma* juice comes into contact with the palate that it generates sensation becoming thus a part of the consciousness of the drinker. The sieve and the palate both have threads in their composition with this difference, however, that while the thread of the sieve only separates the straw from the juice, the thread of sensation in the palate transforms the physical into the spiritual. This transformation is colossal from any canon of measurement and explains very well the interconnectedness of both the spheres of the reality. It is so colossal indeed that it is capable of explaining the mystery of creation. In due cognisance of the significance of this fact, the seer attributes it to the creative power of *Varuṇa*. Psychologically also it is of crucial importance in the discrimination between the wise and the unwise as also in the determination of their respective destinies. According to the seer, those, who with due effort strive to attain to this discretion, are wise but those who lacking in that discretion take *Soma* as a matter of sheer enjoyment, throw themselves into the pit of ignorance, as it were.[1] The seer seems to suggest that it is through the understanding of the operation of *Ṛta* on both the broad planes of existence, i.e., the physical and the spiritual, that one can hope to wade through the mystery of creation and reach the state of enlightenment resulting in self-elevation. As against it, those who keep themselves confined only to the physical, they, no matter howsoever competent in discerning the laws of *Ṛta* operative on this plane, cannot avoid getting drowned into it.

If *Ṛta* is the fundamental imperative behind the creation, time and space are the principles which make that imperative tangible. To put it in terms of the symbols of spinning and weaving, if *Ṛta* is the impetus to spin, space and time are the warp and woof of the cloth of universal creation. If space is constancy in expansion, time is the same in continuity.

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1 ऋतस्य तन्तुर्विततः पवित्र आ जिह्वाया अग्रे वरुणस्य मायया।
धीराश्चित् तत् समिनक्षन्त आशताऽत्रा कर्तमव पदात्यप्रभुः।। *RV.IX.73.9*

Accordingly, *Vaikhanasa*, a Yajurvedic seer, prays to Dawn and Night to weave out a suitable dress for *Indra*, the god of gods, by means of the thread already lying extended. Dawn is the symbol of the day, as the latter begins with it. Thus Dawn and Night practically stand for the day and the night. By virtue of being the fundamental components of time from the seer's viewpoint, they may legitimately be taken to stand for time itself in its dynamics of constant alternation on the universal canvas of space. As *Indra* is addressed in the mantra as the god of gods, he obviously is intended here to be represented as both timeless and spaceless. Provision of clothing to the timeless and spaceless divinity by the factors of time, therefore, suggests to bringing him down to the fold of time and space. Addressing them as two abundantly milching cows bears out the idea that time, in the vision of the seer, is not just a dry sequence of events, but is positively a nourishing agent of the creation making suitable provision for the subsistence of the Timeless happening to throw itself in the dynamics of time.[2]

Obviously Dawn and Night, the weavers of the elegant cloth of time around the Timeless are beautiful, young and feminine. From the cultural viewpoint, it is legitimate, therefore, to draw the conclusion that the task of weaving cloths was accomplished in the Vedic age mostly by ladies. In view of the status of the Dawn and the Night, it can also be safely presumed that those days the art of weaving was popular even among ladies of highborn classes.

That this tradition of weaving goes as far back as the *Ṛgveda* itself is evident from another mantra seen by *Grtsamada* using almost the same terminology as the Yajurvedic seer. Beyond the Yajurvedic seer, however, *Grtsamada* addresses the Dawn and the Night literally as beautiful weavers. They are also characterised as eternally worshipable. These additional features of this mantra go in confirmation of the conclusions draw from the earlier mantra in regard to prevalence of the art of weaving among ladies of the highest strata of society. As regards the idea symbolised in this mantra, it is to be noted that here the cloth being woven by the Dawn and the Night is intended for giving a good look to the sacrifice. Cow's milk is highly useful for this purpose. Incidentally the Dawn and the Night have been conceived as profusely milching cows in this mantra also and in close proximity of the vesture of the sacrifice.

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2 उषासानक्ता वृहती वृहन्तं पयस्वती सुदुघे शूरमिन्द्रम्।
तन्तुं ततं पेशसा सं वयन्ती देवानां देवं यजतः सुरुक्मे।। *YV.XX.41*

Thus it follows that here is an account of the shaping of the sacrifice as a whole rather than that of providing vesture to any of the gods. Obviously the symbolism of weaving the cloth by the Dawn and the Night in this mantra connotes the shaping of the sacrifice and giving it a good look. Thus the Dawn and the Night as factors of Time appear here as weavers of the cloth of sacrifice.[3] They are weavers inasmuch as they give beautiful look to the sacrifice; they are cows in so far as they provide for the basic stuff of it.

There is another mantra seen by *Pratiratha Ātreya* in which the sun, though worshipped highly, appears as a young man, particularly a husband for whom his mothers weave clothing appropriate for use on the occasion of his contact with his wives. Wives are the rays while the Dawn and the Directions are his Mothers. The rays are considered as the sun's wives on account of deriving their procreative capability from him. The Dawn and the Directions, as factors of Time and Space responsible for the emergence of the sun, are naturally regarded as his mothers. Time and Space do not only give birth to the sun but also provide him with the vesture suitable for his meeting with his wives.[4] Now the symbolism on the side of the content involves the seer's cognisance of the origin of the sun in the interaction of space and time. This is suggested by the attribution of his motherhood to the Dawn and the Directions. On the side of the symbolic form, on the other hand, it indicates how the human mothers of that era might have woven clothing suiting the occasion of the marriage of their sons.

The symbol of spinning has been extended to the act of procreation also. In one of the mantras seen by *Brhaduktha*, it has been stated that the sons of great seer *Angiras* have placed *Agni* in two places, the heaven and the earth by means of their third action. The third action is the act of procreation which as the third one pre-supposes study and sacrifice undertaken prior to it. Subsequently while study comes to be characterised as repayment of the debt to the seer, and sacrifice as that to the gods, procreation is treated as the same to the fathers. Incidentally all these three essential acts have been given the symbol of spinning in the Veda. The young student has been regarded as a spinner who takes up

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3 साध्वपांसि सनता न उक्षिते उषासानक्ता वय्येव रण्विते।
तन्तुं ततं संवयन्ती समीची यज्ञस्य पेशः सुदुघे पयस्वती।। *RV.II.3.6*

4 वितन्वते धियो अस्या अपांसि वस्त्रा पुत्राय मातरो वयन्ति।
उपप्रक्षे वृषणो मोदमाना दिवस्पथा वध्वो यन्त्यच्छ।। *Ibid., V.47.6.*

the task of spinning the tradition of Vedic studies from his teacher and hands it over in course of time to his student. So is the case with sacrifice. It, too, is an act of spinning and weaving learnt from the teacher and imparted in turn to his student. Even so is the case with the act of procreation. It is the way to perpetuation of the progeny from generation to generation. As regards the placing of *Agni* in the heaven and the earth by the sons of *Angiras*, as recounted in the mantra under consideration, it amounts to sending the fathers to the heaven by means of their noble actions and perpetuating the generation on the earth through their acts of procreation. *Agni* is the symbol of the soul, no matter be it that of the Father departed to the heaven or that of the child newly born on this earth. Obviously the symbolic act of spinning extends, according to this account, both in space and time.[5] There is another mantra in the *Yajurveda* which too talks of procreation in terms of spinning. Here the initiates of learning have been asked to disperse like the sparks of fire, prepare the path leading godwards and make their parents rejuvenated through the act of procreation and thus spin the thread of generation onwards.[6]

Along with procreation, the seer's venture into the unknown also has been brought out through the imagery of spinning. In one of the highly significant mantras seen by *Trita Āptya*, the Heaven and the Earth have been characterised as the observers and promoters of the principle of *Ṛta* and as possessed of immense power of creativity. They are said to have conceived, produced and brought up a child in the form of *Agni* who is described as the central point of everything mobile and immobile. Heaven is the father of *Agni* while Earth is his mother. He has his origin in the heaven and the Earth is the medium of his manifestation. It is by virtue of being heavenly originally, that he forms the centre of everything mobile and immobile, organic and inorganic, living and non-living, conscious and inert. If, as centre of the physical, he is the subtlest form of energy, as the centre of such a living being as the human, he must be the core of his consciousness. That core has been visualised in the inmost being of the seer and as capable of being discerned through his own higher mind.[7]

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5 द्विधा सूनवोऽसुरं स्वर्विदमास्थापयन्त तृतीयेन कर्मणा।
स्वां प्रजां पितरः पित्र्यं सह आवरेष्वदधुस्तन्तुमाततम्।। *Ibid., X.56.6.*

6 संप्रच्यवध्वमुप संप्रयाताग्ने पथो देवयानान् कृणुध्वम्।
पुनः कृण्वाना पितरा युवानान्वातांसीत् त्वयि तन्तुमेतम् ।। *YV.XV.53*

7 ऋतायिनी मायिनी सं दधाते मित्वा शिशुं जज्ञतुर्वर्धयन्ती।
विश्वस्य नाभिं चरतो ध्रुवस्य कवेश्चित् तन्तुं मनसा वियन्तः।। *RV.X.5.3*

In yet another mantra seen by *Dirghatamas*, it has been stated in regard to the same Heaven and the Earth that they have been created by highly powerful and supremely wise gods inasmuch as they are sisterly interrelated, have originated from a common source, form a pair and dwell in one and the same household. It is on account of such an intimate relationship obtaining between the Heaven and the Earth, the seer suggests, that ever-new threads are spun in the heaven as well as in the depth of the sea by seers by means of their brilliant power of illumination.[8] It means to suggest that had such an intimate relationship not obtained between the Heaven and the Earth, the seers born on the earth could not have had the possibility of spinning the threads of their higher ideas in the heaven making them finer and finer and not to talk of the heavenly sea and of its depth.

The earth indeed represents the physical while the heaven the spiritual. Had man been a product of only the physical, he, as the seer, could by no means have access to the spiritual, much less to its hidden secrets as symbolised by the depth of the sea in the heaven. Since the physical and the spiritual have a common source in the Eternal as also since they are made of one and the same stuff and have conjoined to create objects and living beings on the earth by their joint action, the seer, though apparently bound to the earth, can have participation in the wisdom of the heaven. By virtue of his participation in the heavenly stuff, he can understand things heavenly as well as earthly by activating that part of his being which corresponds directly to the heaven. That part of man's being, according to the Veda, is his inmost being lying unaffected by the convulsions of the worldly life. To enter into that sphere of man's inner being is like getting elevated to the height of the heaven or entering into the depth of the sea in view of its highly mysterious nature. Even then, however, the seers are able to spread finer and finer threads of exploration to that height as well as to that depth. This they are able to do, the seer suggests, by virtue of the brilliant light of consciousness within them.

How the seer's consciousness worked in this regard may be elucidated by another mantra seen by *Dirghatamas* particularly in so far as the symbolism of spinning and weaving is concerned. Starting with the query about the origin of the tangible universe in all its immensity, the seer comes to inquire about the Self which is the source of this consciousness

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8 ते मायिनो ममिरे सुप्रचेतसो जामी सयोनी मिथुना समोकसा।
नव्यंनव्यं तन्तुमातन्वतो दिवि समुद्रे अन्तः कवयःसुदीतयः। । *Ibid.,I.159.4*

within him. Wondering over the miracle of the tiny Self within the individual having the promise of knowing everything, the seer, posing himself as a man innocent of such things, asks how it could be possible that the footsteps, footprints or dwellings of gods could be compressed within the tiny human self so that the seers could spread the seven threads around a year-old calf so as to weave out the full cloth.[9] That these seven threads are nothing but consciousness of the seven planes of being, is evident from the immediately following mantra in the hymn in which the seer further asks as to how it could be possible for the unborn singular principle to project out of itself the six planes of being serving by itself as the seventh one.[10] The year-old calf referred to in the previous mantra, therefore, is the *Aja*, the Unborn of this mantra who is said to have stabilised these six planes of being, the seventh one being the Aja itself. This *Aja* is something as the same or at least kindred to what in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* has been described as the primeval egg being born of *Sat*, Existence, and waiting for maturation for an year's time and then breaking into two parts turning out to be the heaven and the earth along with its content assuming the form of intermediate planes of being.[11]

The mantra under consideration, thus, brings out the seer's cognisance of these planes of being as an act of weaving of the cloth of universal understanding. If spreading of the warp is the manifestation of the Unborn in the form of the seven planes of being, weaving of the woof on that warp is the epistemic exercise of the seer resulting in the cognisance of the total reality and one's fulfilment on that account. The ideogram of the reality, whatsoever, remains incomplete without the provision for its cognisance in the same way as the expansion of the warp is an incomplete act without the provision for weaving the woof on it.

What the significance of this act of the seers in weaving the woof of knowledge over the warp of the reality in the process of becoming may be, is understandable to some extent from a mantra occurring in the last *maṇḍala* of the *Samhitā*. In this mantra, it is suggested that one should

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9 पाकः पृच्छामि मनसाविजानन्देवानामेना निहिता पदानि।
वत्से वष्कयेऽधि सप्त तन्तून् वितन्निरे कवय ओतवा उ।। *Ibid.I.164.5*

10 अचिकित्वाञ्चिकितुषश्चिदत्र कवीन् पृच्छामि विद्मने न विद्वान्।
वि यस्तस्तम्भ षळिमा रजांस्यजस्य रूपे किमपि स्विदेकम्।। *Ibid., I.164.6*

11 असदेवेदमग्र आसीत्। तत्सदासीत्। तत् समभवत। तदाण्डं
निरवर्तत। तत् संवत्सरस्य मात्रामशयत । तन्निरभिद्यत। त आण्डकपाले रजतं च सुवर्ण चाभवताम्। तद्यद् रजतं सेयं पृथिवी। यत्सुवर्ण सा द्यौः.. । यत् तदजायत सोऽसावादित्यः। *Ch.Up.III.18.1-3*

spin the thread and follow the light of the higher world. The wisdom of the seer will provide protection to the path of illumination. In this way, the cloth of life would be woven smoothly, bringing dignity to the human action being accomplished over the divine infrastructure. This is how, the mantra suggests, man can come to himself as a being predominantly discrete and noble. This is also how, it further assures, man may become capable of giving birth to the Divine.[12] Obviously the cloth being woven by seers over the warp spread by the Divine is not an ordinary sort representing the life of merry-making and enjoyment without any purpose in sight. It, on the contrary, stands for treading the path of illumination and noble action potent enough to bring transformation to the human nature. According to this scheme of things, the human has first to become himself perfectly humane. It implies the seer's awareness of the imperfections of the human nature on account of which he has remained partly at least sub-human. The way to elimination of the sub-human elements of the human nature is to develop the power of discrimination. It is with full development of the power of discrimination and getting the same materialised in commensurate action that man can hope to have become fully humane. To become fully humane, however, is not the final end of the human species, points out the seer. Over and above the attainment of perfect manhood, he is expected to give out of himself birth to the divine. It is having come to this end that the cloth of creation will be in a position to be regarded as having been woven completely, according to the seer.

That the seer's approach to the Reality was a patient one and of highly creative nature is evident from one of *Grtsamada's* mantras addressed to god *Varuṇa*. He prays to the deity to remove sin from him like the rope binding him from all around. The sense of guilt lurking in the mind of the seer has figuratively been brought out as a piece of rope keeping him tied down tightly from all around. Feeling uneasy otherwise, the seer prays to the deity to loosen it in his interest. The prospect of getting rid of the sin is not only feeling easy but entering into the stream of *Ṛta*. The sense of guilt keeps him obstructed from reaching the point of universal flow and feeling liberated. While trying to get rid of the bondage, it is not that he is just praying to the deity helplessly without himself putting in any effort. On the contrary, he has kept all his attention engaged in organising his inner capabilities and orienting them to accomplish something creatively.

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12 तन्तुं तन्वन् रजसो भानुमन्विहि ज्योतिष्मतः पथो रक्ष धिया कृतान्।
अनुल्वणं वयत जोगुवामपो मनुर्भव जनया दैव्यं जनम्।। *RV.X.53.6*

That creative action of his psyche has been symbolised here by the act of weaving with the pre-requisite of utmost attention, care and discretion. While keeping himself so much busy with the task and looking forward to the completion of it and the consequent redemption, he gets apprehensive lest the thread of life on which the cloth of high spirituality is being woven so attentively and meticulously, gets snapped in the middle with the undesirable consequence that his whole undertaking gets stopped untimely.[13] Thus the life-long spiritual action of the seer has been brought out here succinctly and tangibly through the symbol of weaving.

While the mantra discussed above makes use of the symbol of weaving in the context of the *sādhanā* of creative action and redemption in the seer's inner life, one immediately preceding it in the hymn uses the same symbol in the context of what is happening in the outside world. Here, as has already been discussed in connection with *Bharadvāja's* vision, Day and Night both are busy in turns in weaving their respective cloths. The Night drops her action in the day-time and takes it up during her own time, while the Day resumes it during its own time dropping the same at the advent of Night. To elaborate on the point as per the seer's account, the warp of action is spread constantly on which Night works in her turn intermittently again and again. At the time she works on the warp, the Sun withdraws his power of action as living beings during the night-time. This, however, does not mean that he retires completely at that time. He, on the contrary, the seer observes, being constantly mobile, rises up on time, comes to view resuming the task of weaving the cloth of light in contrast to that of darkness being woven by Night.[14] Thus, in a way, the work of Day and Night is complementary to each other's and as such is being kept going on constantly by the respective agencies alternatively. To speak in terms of the symbol, the cloth is being woven constantly, no matter be it black or white in turns. Taking inspiration from this mode of action going on the universal scale in the outside world, the seer makes the determination to keep weaving the cloth of his noble action constantly until he comes to the point of redemption when the rope of bondage gets loosened and he feels as if he has reached the lap of *Aditi*, the ultimate state of unity or freedom, as is obvious from the aspirations of another Vedic seer, namely *Śunahśepa.*[15]

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13 वि मच्छथाय रशनामिवाग ऋध्याम ते वरुण रवामृतस्य।
मा तन्तुश्छेदि वयतो धियं मे मा मात्रा शार्यपसः पुर ऋतोः।। *Ibid.,II.28.5*

14 पुनः समव्यद्विततं वयन्ती मध्याकर्तो न्यधाच्छक्म धीरः।
उतसंहायास्थाद् व्युतॅूरदर्धरॅरमतिः सविता देव आगात्।। *Ibid.,II.38.4*

15 *Ibid.,I.24.1-2*

The symbol of the thread recurs finally in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in the question put to sage *Yājñavalkya* by *Uddālaka Āruṇi* in course of the great debate held in the court of King *Janaka* on the problem of the nature of the Ultimate Reality. As per *Uddālaka's* account, the question had its origin in a query put to one *Patañcala Kāpya*, a great teacher of the institution of sacrifice during the Upaniṣadic age, by a *Gandharva* who had taken possession of the former's wife. The name of the *Gandharva* was *Kabandha*. He claims himself to have been one of the sons of *Atharvan*, the prominent seer of the *Atharvaveda*. The *Gandharva* asked *Patañcala* and his students whether they knew of that thread which binds together this world, the other world along with all whatever exists in these worlds. On *Patañcala* admitting his ignorance of it, the *Gandharva* again asked him and his students whether they knew of that Inner Ruler who controls from within this world, the other world and whatever exists in these worlds. On *Patañcala* admitting his ignorance on this point as well, the *Gandharva* explained to him as well as to his students how it is *Prāṇa* which controls everything and how it is *Ātman* which acts as the Inner Ruler controlling one and all from within. He also points out to them that one who knows the thread and the Inner Ruler, is to be regarded as conversant with the secret of the Ultimate Reality, with the secret of creation, with the secret of the gods, with the secret of the Veda, with the secret of the Self and indeed with the secret of anything whatever.[16] These assurances of the *Gandharva* bear out that the secret of the Veda is common with the secret of the Ultimate Reality, of the Self, and of the universe and that the crux of the secret lies in the understanding of the nature of the thread as well as that of the Inner Ruler. To make a distinction between the two, while the secret of the Inner Ruler corresponds to the secret of the Self and the Ultimate Reality, that of the thread stands for the secret of the world and the gods. The Veda is, therefore, to be taken as the source of both the secrets.

The *Upaniṣad* presents the grand finale of the symbolism of spinning and weaving as also, of course, that of the spinner, weaver and wearer of the cloth as mooted out in the Veda and discussed above. While the laws of

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16 वेत्थ नु त्वं काप्य तत् सूत्रं येनायं च लोकः सर्वाणि च
भूतानि संदृब्धानि भवन्तीति।...वेत्थ नु त्वं काप्य तमन्तर्यामिणं य
इमं च लोकं परं च लोकं सर्वाणि च भूतानि योऽन्तरो यमयति।...
यो वै तत् काप्य सूत्रं विद्यात् तं चान्तर्यामिणमिति स ब्रह्मवित् स
लोकवित् स देववित् स वेदवित् स आत्मवित् स सर्ववित् ।। *Brh.Up.III.7.1.*

Ṛta along with their application in the creation and progression of the world in all its multiplicity of objects and beings and complexity of their interactions and interrelationships have been brought out in the Veda through the symbol of spinning and weaving, the Ultimate Reality as the Inner Ruler has been represented symbolically as the weaver and wearer of the cloth of creation. Night, Day, Dawn, Fire, Sun, etc., are accomplishing the task of weaving only on behalf of the Inner Ruler. This is evident from the *Upaniṣadic* account of the latter as the indweller and inner controller of the Earth, Water, Fire, Atmosphere, Air, Heaven, Sun, Directions, Moon, Stars, Space, Darkness, Heat and Light. Earth, etc., are said to be the body of the Inner Controller while He acting as their self. Consequently, they, as the dwelling of Him, are His cloth and conversely from the viewpoint of the Inner Controller indwelling them they are also the spinners of the thread as well as weavers of the cloth. This is evident from our discussion above where the same Night is sometimes referred to as the mantle of darkness and at others as the weaver of that mantle. So is the case with *Uṣas*, Day, Fire, etc.

What is true on the ontological side, the same holds good on the epistemic side also. The *Upaniṣad* explains it under the caption a*dhyātma*. The Inner Controller, according to it, indwells and controls from within the principles of life, speech, sight, audition, touch, reflection, knowledge and procreation etc., without these being aware of it. This is where lies the rationale of the use of the symbol of spinning and weaving in regard to the physical body, life, sense organs and organs of action and, of course, in regard to the spectacular achievements of the seers in reflection, ideation, and contemplation. Having realised the Self as the indweller and inner controller of their psycho-physical mechanism and functions, they treated the latter as the spinning wheel, loom and clothing meant for the use of the former.

It is against this profound Vedic background that *Sri Kṛsṇa* in the *Bhagavadgitā* could formulate for the sake of *Arjuna* the relationship between the body and the Self in terms of the cloth and the wearer and by means of it bring home to him the message of the pre-eminence of the interest of the Self over that of the body.[17]

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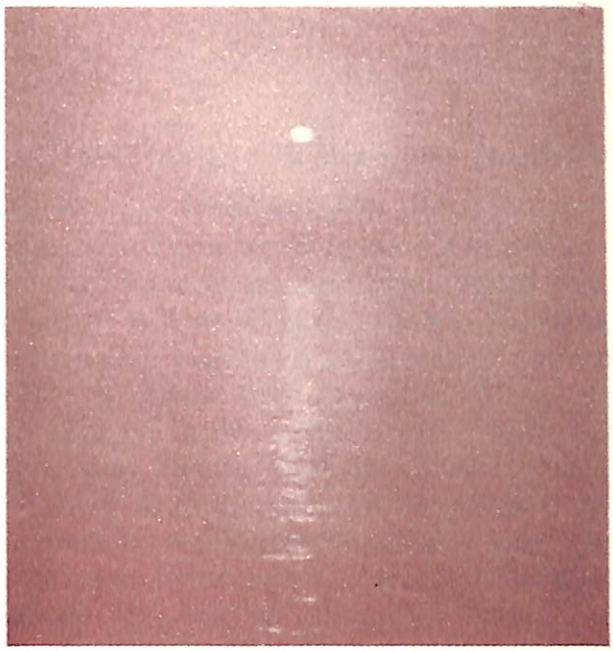
17 वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही।। *Bhagavadgītā II.22*



Light

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Light is one of the most fascinating spectacles to the Vedic seer. He turns to it frequently under one name or the other, but particularly with the use of the word *jyotiṣ*. This word occurs more than one hundred times in the *Ṛgveda* alone. Other synonyms of the word used in the *Samhitā*, though not so frequently, are *prakāśa, bhargas, bhāsas, dipti, didhiti,* etc. Obviously light is a self-evident phenomenon. Instead of needing anything else, besides the eyesight, to make itself seen, it is an indispensable means to make visible other things there in the outside world. Now the question is whether the Vedic seer turns to light so frequently and so eagerly in this external sense or does he imply by it anything else. If he knows only the external light, any question relating to the symbolism of it does not arise at all. For, in that case, things would be explicable entirely in the realistic sense itself.

Dissociating themselves completely from the tradition, some of the modern Vedic scholars, particularly under the leadership of the Westerners, have striven to show that what the Vedas primarily are concerned with is the physical light shed by the sun, the dawn, the fire, etc., and that if anything else seems to have been suggested by light there, that must be a secondary development. They explain this contention by facile recourse to the theory of Āryan Invasion. According to it, when the Āryans entered into the portals of India all anew, things here were totally unfamiliar to them. They had to grope for the means of subsistence of themselves as well as of their cattle at each step. At that stage, therefore, the light of the dawn and the sun during the day time and that of the moon and fire during the night time was a dire necessity. Since whatever came to be felt as essential for their subsistence happened to be cherished by them in high regard, light came to occupy their mind pre-eminently. And hence so frequent use of it in the literature bequeathed to us by them. There are a number of references in the *Samhitās* which go to bear out the veracity of this contention. For instance, there is a mantra seen by *Kutsa Angirasa* in which the seer asks people to get up and be active as light, the source of life, has dawned and darkness has cleared the path for the sun.[1] Here obviously some sort of suffocation seems to have been felt

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1 उदीर्ध्व जीवो असुर्न आगादप प्रागात् तम आ ज्योतिरेति।
आरैक् पन्थां यातवे सूर्यायागन्म यत्र प्रतिरन्त आयुः।। RV.I.113.16

due to the continuance of pitched darkness which the seer is glad to see the end of with dawning of the dawn and rising of the sun. To take the sun as the basis of life is by no means an ordinary idea, yet what is evident in this mantra is that the seer seems to welcome the light of the sun as is expected of any primitive man. Similarly, there is another mantra addressed to the sun in which the latter has been described as bearing great light, possessed of great seeing power, luminous, soothing to every eye, emerging out of stupendous energy and eagerly awaited by everyone for the sake of the continuance of life.[2] In this mantra also, though the idea of the sun as emerging out of stupendous energy is by no means an ordinary one, the account can easily be taken to refer to the solar disc looking alike from all places and seeming to observe by itself all the people together. In yet another mantra, he again is described as swimming along the sky and as omniscient, luminous and illuminating everything universally.[3]

Similar is the case with the Dawn. In view of her shading diversely in the horizon, she has been invoked in the plural and as shedding wonderful light, giving birth to the sun, to the sacrifice and to *Agni* and removing the darkness which is not to the liking of the seer.[4] In another mantra, she has been addressed as the best of the lights, variegated, and luminous and as giving birth to the sun on the one hand and as having had her path cleared by the night on the other.[5] In another mantra, she is visualised as clearing the path for the people, riding a colossal chariot, mobilising people universally and shedding her light at the break of the day.[6] All these accounts have been explained by scholars in modern times in terms of the physical phenomena of the sequence of night, dawn and rising of the sun in the commonplace manner.

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2 महि ज्योतिर्विभृतं त्वा विचक्षण भास्वन्तं चक्षुषेचक्षुषे मयः।
आरोहन्तं बृहतः पाजसस्परि वयं जीवाः प्रति पश्येम सूर्य।। *Ibid.,X.37.8*

3 तरणि र्विश्वदर्शतो ज्योतिष्कृदसि सूर्य।
विश्वमाभासि रोचनम्।। *Ibid., I.50.4*

4 एता उ त्याः प्रत्यदृश्रन् पुरस्ताज्ज्योतिर्यच्छन्तीरूषसो विभातीः।
अजीजनन्त्सूर्य यज्ञमग्निमपाचीनं तमो अगादजुष्टम्।। *Ibid., VII.78.3*

5 इदं श्रेष्ठं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरागाच्चित्रः प्रकेतो अजनिष्ट विभ्वा।
यथा प्रसूता सवितुः सवॉय एवा रात्र्युषसे योनिमारैक्।। *Ibid.,I.113.1*

6 एषा जनं दर्शता बोधयन्ती सुगान्पथः कृण्वती यात्यग्रे
बृहद्रथा बृहती विश्वमिन्वोषा ज्योतिर्यच्छत्यग्रे अह्नाम्।। *Ibid., V.80.2*

Kindred is the case of *Agni*. In one of the mantras seen by *Ketu*, it is said to have made the sun, as a star, ascend the heaven and shed light for the sake of the people.[7] Despite very many possibilities of interpretation in a deeper sense, the whole content of the mantra is amenable to be taken as referring to the primitive belief that the sun ascends the heaven and sheds the light on account of the sacrifice performed by man in the fire which must have been quite natural to the primitive Āryans. There is another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva* in which *Agni* is said to have removed the blinding darkness and thus to have made people see things.[8]

There are certain mantras in which the light of *Agni* or even higher luminaries has been said to have been created specially for the *Arya*. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by *Nodhā Gautama*, *Agni*, besides being described as the head of the heaven, navel of the earth, and pervasive of the intermediate space, is said to have been created by gods as a source of light specially for the *Ārya*.[9] Similarly in another mantra seen by *Vasistha*, *Agni* is prayed to drive out the *Dasyus* from their houses and produce broad light in the interest of the *Arya*.[10] From such references to *Dasyu*, *Ārya* and light made together in certain mantras, though only a few, it was concluded in a facile way that the Veda is the creation of a people coming from outside India, groping in the dark in the strange land, defeating the aborigines and craving eagerly for the light of the dawn, sun and *Agni* and making it eventually the focal point of their aspiration subsequently through religious beliefs and practices as well as philosophical propositions.

But if we go deeper into the accounts, we veritably find that things are not so simple as they have been given to understand by scholars in the modern times. It does not take us much time to discover that light in the Veda from the very beginning has been used symbolically with such a subtleness of usage that very often it seems to be realistic out and out creating thus the impression that the whole of the Veda is just a twisted account of a primitive Indian situation involving confrontation between two classes of people, one indigenous and the other foreign resulting

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7 अग्ने नक्षत्रमजरमा सूर्य रोहये दिवि।
दधज्ज्योतिर्जनेभ्यः।। *Ibid.,X.156.4*

8 अन्धा तमांसि दुधिता विचक्षे नृभ्यश्चकार नृतमो अभिष्टौ।। *Ibid.,IV.16.4.*

9 मूर्धा दिवो नाभिरग्निः पृथिव्या अथाभवदरती रोदस्योः।
तं त्वा देवासोऽजनयन्त देवं वैश्वानर ज्योतिरिदार्याय।। *Ibid.,I.59.2.*

10 त्वं दस्यूँरोकसो अग्न आज उरुज्योतिर्जनयन्नार्याय।। *Ibid., VII.5.6.*

eventually in the victory and supremacy of the latter and its subsequent attempt to adjust itself to the novel situation it happened to be placed in.

That light is symbolic in the Veda is evident from the use of it in secondary senses right from the very beginning. In the story of *Ṛjrasvā*, for instance, in which the latter was rendered blind by his father on account of having allowed on hundred of his sheep to be devoured by a she-wolf, it has been stated that the gods *Aśvins*, when prayed to by him, restored light to his eyes and thus made him get rid of his blindness.[11] There is a marked difference between physical light such as emitted by the sun and fire and the sensory light such as one possessed by the eyesight. While the physical light is inorganic, the eyesight is organic. It, no doubt, has assimilated to it elements of the physical light but that is done under the aegis of the Self which is entirely different from any physical light whatever. While the physical light is an external aid to the act of seeing, the eyesight acts as the seer itself, though, of course, as the agent of the real seer which is the Self. To gloss over this so radical a difference as this and make use of light for the eyesight is not an ordinary task, though looking so apparently. It involves a categorical shift in ideation which is the crux of symbolic usage. That `light' in this mantra is symbolic of the eyesight is evident from the use of the word *aksi* as an alternative of *jyotiş* in this mantra as well as in one occurring in the immediately preceding hymn where the former alone has been used to total exclusion of the latter.[12] Evidently, addition of *jyotiş* in the subsequent mantra along with *akşi* entails a clear trace of symbolic usage, as it brings perceptual vividness to the conceptual opaqueness.

We find similar alternation of *caksus* and *jyotiş* in one and the same sense in another mantra seen by *Pāyu*. Here the seer prays to *Agni* to impart to one *Rebha* that eye by means of which he looks at the demons who torment the noble people with their hooves. By means of that light, which is divine and equivalent to one used by seer *Atharvan* in destroying the demons, *Agni* is requested to burn the ignorant who is opposed to truth.[13] In this mantra, *ćakşus* has been made equivalent to *jyotiş* and that also not the ordinary one but the divine. The same *ćakşus*, on the other hand,

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11 शतं मेषान् वृक्ये मामहानं तमः प्रणीतमशिवेन पित्रा।
आक्षी ऋज्राश्वे अश्विनावधत्तं ज्योतिरन्धाय चक्रथुर्विचक्षे।। *Ibid.,I.117.17*

12 शतं मेषान् वृक्ये चक्षदानमृज्राश्वं तं पितान्धं चकार।
तस्मा अक्षी नासत्या विचक्ष आधत्तं दसा भिषजावनर्वन्।। *Ibid., I.116.16*

13 तदग्ने चक्षुःप्रतिधेहि रेभे शफारूजं येन पश्यसि यातुधानान्।
अथर्ववज्ज्योतिषा दैव्येन सत्यं धूर्वन्तमचितं न्योष।। *Ibid., X.87.12*

has been equated to that of seer *Atharvan*, obviously an elevated human being. Thus practically the *ćakşus* of the seer comes to be described as the divine light which is capable of removing ignorance and safeguarding truth. To view the eye of the seer as a light of this description is obviously a symbolic way of brining out things which otherwise are incapable of being referred to with any vividness. The seer's eyesight here has been symbolised by the luminous light of *Agni* of divine origin and hence is supposed to have tremendous capability of removing the darkness of ignorance and discerning the truth from the falsehood.

In view of the above, when it is observed by the seer that *Indra* discerned the light out of the darkness by special use of his intellect, it does not mean that he brought some or the other sort of physical light to help the seer get out of the physical darkness. The doubt, if any, gets further removed by the use of the word *durita*, misconduct or evil, as used in the mantra concerned seen by *Viśvāmitra*. As the mantra states, it is as a result of *Indra* discerning light out of darkness by the use of his higher knowledge that the seer gets rid of misconduct in the war of life.[14] Life is a battlefield in which there is every possibility of falling into wrong tracks and get ruined. It is only some sort of higher power of understanding originating from the corresponding plane of consciousness which can guide one to escape such pitfalls symbolised by darkness as opposed to light representing the state of right understanding.

The Vedic light has intimately been associated with *Aditi*, the mother of *Ādityas*. The *Ādityas* include *Sūrya*, the sun, which is the original source of light in our solar system, no matter be that light coming from the fire, the moon, the dawn or the planets. If the Vedic seers were realistic in regard to light, they, with all possible stretch of imagination, would have associated it with the sun eventually. But the case is quite different. They take the origin of light to the very mother of *Sūrya*, that is *Aditi*. She represents the state of things anterior to division. Thus, she is the state of pure existence which by passing through the course of division assumes the form of the world of diversity. Since, as a matter of principle, everything in the universe tends to get restored to its original source, *Aditi* is very well supposed as also the ultimate destiny of the world where everything is to get merged into her. This is evident from the twofold derivation of word *aditi*, *a* + *do*, to divide and *ad*, to eat. The association of light with *Aditi*, therefore, suggests that the Vedic seer means by light not so much the physical light as that lying above the physical and

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14 ज्योतिर्वृणीत तमसो विजानन्नारे स्याम दुरितादभीके। Ibid.,III.39.7

constituting the source of the physical.

This is evident from the well-calculated adjectives used with light particularly in its association with *Aditi*. One of such adjectives is *avadhra*, indestructible. In one of the mantras seen by *Vasistha*, it has been prayed that gods *Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra* and *Āryaman* may provide the devotee with something lustrous as also magnificent light of *Aditi*.[15] It need not be pointed out that the Vedic seer was eminently conscious of the destructibility of everything including the physical light. Even then, however, if he characterises the peculiar light of *Aditi* as indestructible and eagerly aspires for it, that light must be different from the physical.

In another mantra, *Aditi* is prayed to protect mankind from sin and make available to one and all the heavenly light which is absolutely inoffensive.[16] Sin is something psychological and hence inaccessible to physical light. The physical light may prevent anyone from committing any sinful act, but can by no means extricate from anyone the sense of sinfulness settled in his mind. It can be removed only by consciousness higher than one the sinful act was committed in. The higher that remedial consciousness, the greater the possibility of its effectiveness. As is evident from the famous observation of the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, it is only on seeing the highest that one has the possibility of getting all the knots of his heart untied and all the doubts of his mind removed.[17] The Rgvedic seer's prayer for that light which may redeem mankind of his sense of guilt and sin, therefore, suggests to the supreme height of the light much above the physical. This status of the light is also confirmed by the use of the adjective *avrka*, inoffensive, in association with it.

Complete redemption from fear is another characteristic feature of the Vedic light. In one of the mantras seen by him seer *Grtsamada* lays himself bare before the *Ādityas* that he is a completely innocent man knowing nothing even about the directions and that therefore he is to be made seasoned and possessed of so much wisdom as under the guidance of them he may attain to the light of fearlessness. Knowing nothing even

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15 अस्मे इन्द्रो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा द्युम्नं यच्छन्तु महि शर्म सप्रथः।
अवध्रं ज्योतिरदितेर्ऋतावृधो देवस्य श्लोकं सवितुर्मनामहे।। *Ibid., VII.82.10*

16 विश्वस्मान्नो अदितिः पात्वंहसो माता मित्रस्य वरुणस्य रेवतः।
स्वर्वज्ज्योतिरवृकं नशीमहि तद्देवानामवो अद्या वृणीमहे।। *Ibid., X.36.3*

17 भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे।। *Mundaka Up. II.2.9.*

of the directions is indicative of the seer's complete withdrawal from the outside world while dismissal of everything from his psyche bears out his complete surrender to the Divine. Such a preparation from the side of the human psyche is required only for getting reflected in it something necessarily supra-mundane. That something has been characterised here in the mantra as the light of fearlessness.[18] The human mind, when involved in the worldly affairs, feels itself crowded with all sorts of apprehensions and fears. It is only by disentangling itself from such involvements as also by redirecting and elevating the mind to the status of the divine that one can hope to get redeemed of all fear whatever. Just as darkness is the source of fear from the physical, even so ignorant involvement in the worldly affairs is the source of apprehension from the psychic. Just as redemption from the fear of the physical born of darkness depends on the procurement of the physical light, even so redemption from the fear of the psychic requires attainment of the knowledge of the spiritual sort. That knowledge here in the mantra has been symbolised by light capable of bringing fearlessness.

Sāyaṇa's commentary particularly on *abhayam jyotih* of this mantra is interesting. He takes this term to refer either to the light of the sun or to the internal illumination which is of the nature of knowledge.[19] Commenting like this, *Sāyaṇa* leaves the real thrust of meaning of the mantra in suspense. By suggesting the alternative meanings, he leaves it on the reader to decide whether the light referred to here is of physical or of spiritual nature. The primacy he has given to the solar light in the order he accords to them may easily be taken as a proof of his preference for it. This is true not only of his interpretation on this mantra but on all those mantras on which he happens to offer the alternative spiritual interpretation. This practice on his part has been an abominable source of misunderstanding about the real thrust of meaning of the Vedic mantras. As a matter of principle, it is but natural for any reader or interpreter to enter into any symbolic text, like the Veda, through its symbolic stuff and then reach its real crux. The mishap with *Sāyaṇa*, however, was that in most of the cases he kept himself stuck to the externals of the meaning and did not care to pay the same attention to its internals. Committed to the sacrificial purpose as he was in his interpretation, it was rather out of his purview to take care of the real thrust of the meaning which in any

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18 न दक्षिणा विचिकिते न सव्या न प्राचीनमादित्या नोत पश्चा।
पाक्या चिद्वसवो धीर्या चिद् युष्मानीतो अभयं ज्योतिरश्याम्।। RV.II.27.11

19 सौरं तेज आन्तरं वा ज्ञानात्मकं ज्योतिः। *Sāyaṇa on RV.II.27.11*

case must relate to what is sought to be symbolised rather than to the symbolic stuff itself. Thus the alternatives suggested by *Sāyaṇa* in regard to this mantra, as well as other mantras he has commented on likewise, are to be treated not as of equal status and as unconcerned with each other but as mutually interrelated as the symbol and the idea symbolised.

Another feature of the light of fearlessness is its broadness. Significantly enough, this feature of it also has been noted by *Grtsamada* in the same continuation. In the fourteenth mantra of the same hymn he prays to *Aditi, Mitra, Varuṇa* and *Indra* to condone mankind for whatever sin he may have committed and be gracious on him so that he may attain to light characterised by broadness as well as fearlessness and lying beyond the reach of long darkness.[20] What is this broad light and what is the long darkness feared by the seer? Scholars generally have taken this broad light of fearlessness as that of the day-time. This is evident from *Griffith's* footnote to this mantra: "*Day-light is comparatively free from danger.*" *Bal Gangadhar Tilak* takes a long stride above this contention by introducing his hypothesis of the Arctic origin of the Āryans. According to him, the Vedic Āryans while living earlier in the Arctic region were very much afraid of long nights there and hence their natural craving for the broad day-light which was utterly rare at that location.[21] The question is if the long night was known to them from their birth's time, where was the scope for their being unnecessarily afraid of it. Moreover, if they had never come across the broad day-light in their lives, what was the point in their craving for it unnecessarily. To go a step still further, if alternation of long night and short day was a natural phenomenon there in the Arctic region known to the people right from the beginning of their lives, where was the point of their getting rid of the sin committed possibly by them against the gods and the goddesses. The precondition of getting rid of sins before expecting to attain to the broad light suggests to the highly spiritual character of the latter. When the light would be spiritual, the darkness also would automatically become cognate to it in its character. *Sāyaṇa* is wise enough to take by *abhayam jyotir* here also *jñānātmakam prakāśam*, illumination of knowledge, as an alternative to mere *prakāśam*, physical light. Indeed, the light of *Aditi* in which her sons *Mitra, Varuṇa* and *Indra* would be inhering, would be the cognitive possibility of the nature of things associated inseparably with the fundamental nature of things by

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20 अदिते मित्र वरुणोत मृल यद्वो वयं चकृमा कश्चिदागः।
उर्वश्यामभयं ज्योतिरिन्द्र मा नो दीर्घा अभिनशन् तमिस्राः।। *RV.II.27.14*

21 *B.G. Tilak, The Arctic Home in the Vedas (Poona, 1956) p.115*

virtue of which man sees the possibility of knowing the Reality in its utmost secret being. The long and fearful darkness in that case, on the contrary, would automatically symbolise the state of ignorance under which mankind is existing and committing all sorts of sins. Understanding of this symbolism underlying the vision of the seer does away with the necessity of taking the locale of it in the difficult and rather improbable Arctic region and adding to it the still less probable fact of its faded memory lurking in the mind of the Vedic Āryans generations after they had travelled thousands of miles from there to India.

That this light belongs to a state of being entirely different from the physical is evident from another mantra seen by *Garga Bhāradvāja* in which the seer prays to *Indra* to lead mankind to the broad world where divine light of fearlessness reigns supreme and where it could dwell comfortably under the protection of the lofty and mighty arms of the divinity.[22] In contravention to *Tilak's* hypothesis, when the Vedic Āryans had already reached India and settled down here, there was no point in their praying to the god to lead them further to the world of light. With the long darkness still lurking in their unconscious, they should rather have found the Indian scenario of brilliant light in itself a little abhorrent to them. The seer's indication to the loftiness of the light aspired for indicates to the sublimity of it implying its higher position in the gradation of being.

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22 उरुं नो लोकमनु नेषि विद्वान्त्स्वर्वज्ज्योतिरभयं स्वस्ति।
ऋष्वा त इन्द्र स्थविरस्य बाहू उपस्थेयाम शरणा वृहन्ता।। RV.VI.47.8

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That the light of the Vedic seer is symbolic of the highly willed aspiration of man is evident from a mantra seen by *Śakti Vasistha*. In this mantra, the seer prays to *Indra* to infuse will-power into him in the same way as the father infuses his will-power into his sons. Considering life symbolically as an expedition, he prays to the deity to make mankind so capable as to attain to the light.[1] If the light aspired for were merely the physical light, no matter that of the sun or of fire, there was no necessity of deploying one's total will-power to its attainment. What would be aimed at by deploying total will-power would obviously form the highest objective of life. That objective in this mantra has been indicated by the word *jyotiş*, light.

There is another mantra seen by *Satyadhṛti* according to which that individual, whom the sons of *Aditi* provide with the eternal light for the sake of living, cannot be overpowered by the evil-minded.[2] What may be the light referred to in this mantra? If it were the light of the sun or the fire, it could not have been characterised as eternal since such a light is subject to appearance and disappearance or burning and extinction. Secondly, such a light is available to all universally and naturally and hence there is no necessity of anyone getting it specially from the Divine as a great favour for him. In the third place, the light which is capable of making one immune to the designs of the evil-minded must be spiritual in character. And the spiritual light is no light at all in any physical sense of the term. If it happens to be described as a light, that is only by symbolic way of expression, the symbolism emerging out of some sort of similitude in the working of the physical and the spiritual. Just as the physical light makes things of the external world visible to the individual concerned, even so the spiritual light enables his inner being to understand things internal discretely. While the physical light is an aid to seeing things physical, the spiritual light does the same in regard to understanding. The state in which the aid to understanding may be conceivable as a light,

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1 इन्द्र कतुं न आ भर पिता पुत्रेभ्यो यथा।
शिक्षा णो अस्मिन् पुरुहूत यामनि जीवा ज्योतिरशीमहि।। *RV.VII.32.26*

2 यस्मै पुत्रासो अदितेः प्रजीवसे मर्त्याय।
ज्योतिर्यच्छन्त्यजस्रम्।। *Ibid.,X.185.3*

however, cannot be one of ideation or imagination, inferred or hypothetical, since they all are some sort of groping in the dark in the absence of adequate quantum of light. That state of understanding alone deserves to be conceived as a light which makes the object of understanding clear to the person concerned as light makes things clear to him at once with just one flash of it. This is the basic point why light has been chosen by the Vedic seer for symbolising the psychic and spiritual power of illumination.

This illumination, as has already been pointed out is not the product of conceptualisation, ideation, imagination or thinking. They may be helpful in making it descend, but they in no case be considered as producers of it. This viewpoint of the seer in regard to what is symbolised by light in the Veda is understandable from the seer's characterisation of it as the light of primeval seed of creation serving as the axis of existence and burning above the heaven.[3] While translating this mantra, *Griffith* adds the footnote: "*The sun which is lighted up beyond the range of men's sight.*" Evidently what he understands by this mantra is that it relates to the solar disc shining in the sky. In this understanding he simply follows *Sāyaṇa* inasmuch as the latter considers it as a prayer to *Indra* in which the latter has been visualised in the form of sun shining, vaporising water and moving in the sky throughout the whole day. It is obvious that while commenting on the mantra, *Sāyaṇa* concerns himself only with the apparent part of the content as referring to the sun. The sun, no doubt, was the biggest luminary before the seer shining in the sky and creating the daytime. But how to account for its description as shining above the heaven? When *Sūrya* in the Veda is regarded as the god of the heaven, how can he transcend heaven and, moreover, shine from above it? It shows that what is intended to be referred to in this mantra is not the sun in itself as shining in the sky but as an indicator or symbol of something much higher than it and bearing at the same time some sort of semblance or causal relationship with it. This interpretation finds confirmation from at least a couple of mantras preceding it in the hymn. In the first one of these mantras, it has been stated that the seer availed himself of the wisdom in the valley of mountains and at the confluence of rivers.[4] In the next one it has been observed that having got himself enlightened in this way he looks from his lofty position at the sea below out of which

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3 आदित् प्रलस्य रेतसो ज्योतिष्पश्यन्ति वासरम्।
परो यदिध्यते दिवा।। ibid., VIII.6.30

4 उपह्वरे गिरीणां संगथे च नदीनाम्।
धिया विप्रो अजायत।। *Ibid., VIII.6.28*

emerges the creation.[5] It is after these two mantras that the one under consideration has been placed with its account of the light of the primeval seed shining above the heaven. Obviously the seer would not choose the seclusion of the mountainous cavern and the confluence of rivers just to see the sea below and the sun above in the sky and consider this seeing of his as of the order sufficient to elevate him to the status of the scion of the supernal wisdom.

Without going into the symbolism of the mountainous cavern, confluence, river and sea at the moment, what one would like to point out is that the light of the primeval seed which the seer comes to see after having understood things below must be something most fundamental in the spectrum of being. A definite indication of it can be had from the quotation of this mantra along with another one dealing with the same light in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in a context forming the background of the philosophy of *Bhagavadgītā*. While recounting how the sage *Ghora Aṅgiras* imparted to *Kṛṣṇa*, the son of *Devakī*, the rare insight of life as a series of sacrifices and how the latter having understood it felt his thirst for knowledge fully quenched, the *Upaniṣad*, in confirmation of its viewpoint, quotes two mantras from the *Ṛgveda*, one of them being the same as one quoted at *footnote No.3* above.[6] This mantra, therefore, must embody within it, according to the Upaniṣadic sage, the basic metaphysical background of this philosophy. Life can be treated as a sacrifice only under the assumption that it in itself is the result of a magnificent sacrifice made in the fire of himself by the Supreme by way of creating the universe as has been given in the Vedic hymn to *Puruṣa*. Accordingly, the fire in which the primeval *Puruṣa* would have sacrificed himself would naturally have been the fire of himself serving as the seed of creation on the one hand and as the source of primeval light on the other. In the hymn to *Puruṣa*, *Agni* is said to be born out of the mouth of Him while *Sūrya* out of His eye. The fire of himself in which He offered himself, would, therefore, belong to the stratum of being much higher than that of the fire or the sun. Instead of being limited to the fire and the sun, it would have to be the ultimate source of creation while its light would be the knowledge of the same creation. This is why this light has been characterised as *pratna*, primeval, and as existing in transcendence of the heaven. To confine it to the sun, as has been done by *Sāyaṇa* and

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5 अतः समुद्रमुद्वतश्चिकित्वॉ अव पश्यति।
यतो विपान एजति।। *Ibid., VIII.6.29*

6 *Chāndogya Up.III.17*

his followers, is therefore a gross misunderstanding of it. Being the mightiest luminary before us, the sun, however, may serve as the most befitting symbol of it.

This suggestion finds an immediate confirmation in the second Vedic mantra quoted in the *Upaniṣad*. In this mantra, seer *Praskaṇva* talks of his experience of moving from darkness to light, seeing the higher light and then ultimately of his reaching *Sūrya*, the highest among gods and thus bearing the highest light.[7] The sun as a symbol of the highest light is so befitting that one can easily be misled to treat the symbol itself as the basic object sought to be indicated to. This is evident from *Sāyaṇa* himself taking it in a matter of fact manner as referring to the sun and the darkness of the night. But if that were the case, what was the relevance of the *Upaniṣad* quoting this mantra in confirmation of its philosophy of life as a sacrifice? Secondly, the sun is only one of the gods in the Veda and by no means the supreme one, as is given in this mantra. If he comes to be regarded as the Supreme, that must be only symbolically. In the third place, the seer talks here not only of seeing the sun or reaching the light of the sun but of reaching the sun itself. The seer can have the experience of reaching the sun only if the latter is symbolic of something else.

That something symbolised by the sun is the Ultimate Reality. This is evident from the same *Upaniṣad* inasmuch as it makes use of the sun as a symbol of the quest of Brahman. It suggests that if one wants to know Brahman, one may fruitfully take the sun as a symbol of it by worshipping which he may reach Brahman itself ultimately. In regard to this possibility, it reveals the entire process of manifestation of the world including the sun out of the Ultimate. It starts from *asat*, something like non-being, as the most fundamental principle or state of things behind the entire scenario of the world. But since absolute non-being cannot give rise to being, the sage admits that seeming non-being as Being itself. When willing to become, the sage observes, that Being gives rise to an egg. The egg, according to it, remains still for a year, so to say, and then breaks into two. The upper half of it is golden in colour and assumes the form of the heaven while the lower half is silvery in colour and assumes the form of the earth. What is born out of the crust of the egg, is the sun,

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7 उद् वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम्।
देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम्।। *RV.I.50.10.*

according to the *Upaniṣad.*[8] As per this account, the source of the primeval light must not be the physical sun but that Ultimate Reality which forms the source of the sun as well.

There are very many indications to it in the Veda itself. For instance, in a mantra seen by *Vasistha*, it is aspired that god *Savitṛ* may serve as the resort of that light which is responsible for the birth of all and is immortal.[9] As a matter of fact, *Savitṛ* is not identical to the physical sun. If somehow he looks as identical to the sun, that is only due to the underlying symbolism. Otherwise, *Savitṛ* as the basic impetus behind the creation of the world is distinct from the sun which is just one of a multitude of products of that impetus. This is quite evident from the sacred *Gāyatri* mantra also, if, of course, read along with the *vyāhṛtis*. *Bhūh, bhuvah* and *svah* are indicators of the grades of being in transcendence of which lies the most desired and excellent light of *Savitṛ* as the basis of contemplation for the opening out of the secret wisdom.

The mystery of the Vedic light also gets unveiled through consideration over one of the mantras addressed to *Brhaspati*. Unlike *Sūrya, Brhaspati* is not associated at all with any natural phenomenon. He is the lord of mantras by virtue of being the source of them. And yet, in the mantra concerned, he is said to have been born in the highest heaven refulgent with great light. He is also conceived as having seven mouths, as born of power and as having blown out darkness by means of his seven rays.[10] Leaving apart the rest of the symbolism involved in it, which, however, are quite akin to that of the famous four-horned bull envisioned by the same seer a little later, what is relevant in this context to note is that this god of mantras is said to have been born in the highest heaven of brilliant light. On the basis of his lordship over mantras, the highest heaven can be identified with the highest heaven of seer *Dirghatamas* who also conceives of it as the ultimate source of all the mantras.[11] The light of this heaven, therefore, must be of a nature other than the physical. It must be the

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8 आदित्यो ब्रह्मेत्यादेशः। तस्योपव्याख्यानम्।असदेवेदमग्र आसीत्।
तत्सदासीत्। तत्समभवत्। तदाण्डं निरवर्तत । तत्संवत्सरस्य मात्रामशयत।
तन्निरभिद्यत। ते आण्डकपाले रजतं च सुवर्ण चाभवताम्। तद्यद्रजतं सेयं
पृथिवी। यत् सुवर्ण सा द्यौः। ...अथ यत् तदजायत सोऽसावादित्यः। *Ch.Up.II.19.13*

9 उदु ज्योतिरमृतं विश्वजन्यं विश्वानरः सविता देवो अश्रेत्। *RV.VII.76.1*

10 बृहस्पतिः प्रथमं जायमानो महो ज्योतिषः परमे व्योमन्।
सप्तास्यस्तुविजातो रवेण वि सप्तरश्मिरधमत् तमांसि ।। *Ibid.,IV.50.4*

11 ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः। *Ibid.,I.164.39*

light of deeper understanding, wisdom and knowledge or indeed of higher consciousness necessary for these functions.

Position of the principle symbolised by light in the Veda becomes still clearer after consideration over mantras bearing its relationship with *Ṛta*. *Ṛta* is the dynamics of the supreme principle of being and existence responsible for order and concord in the midst of the bewildering diversity of manifestations forming the world and the universe. It, along with *Satya*, is the first product of the conflagration of *tapas* undergone by the Supreme when wishing to create, as seer *Aghamarṣaṇa* observes.[12] Obviously this conflagration must have resulted in a mighty illumination. Since everything else in the spectrum of being, including even time and space, is a product of this conflagration, the light of it coming, if at all, to the human mind, as it seems to have come to the seer, must be out and out metaphysical, and if physical at all, that must be conceived analogically so just for the sake of giving an idea of it subsequently to the lesser people.

As regards the association of *Ṛta* with light, there is a mantra seen by *Medhātithi* in which *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* have been described as promoters of *Ṛta* by means of *Ṛta* as well as lords of the light of *Ṛta*.[13] The light of *Ṛta* would understandably be the enormous wisdom involved in the creation as well as sustenance of the universe. Similarly, in another mantra seen by *Grtsamada*, *Brhaspati* has been prayed to create obstruction in the way of rumour-mongers as well as of darkness by virtue of having taken his seat on the chariot of *Ṛta* which is luminous with light.[14] The chariot of *Ṛta* is the *Ṛta* itself supposed to be in the state of movement with *Brhaspati* seated on it on account of its eternal dynamics operative most discreetly.

If the seer could visualise *Ṛta* in its dynamics, he could also envision it as merging into the Ultimate Stasis. A graphic account of it is to be found in a mantra seen by *Śrutavit* of the lineage of *Atri*. He claims to have seen by himself the state of being where the eternal *Ṛta* is enshrouded in *Ṛta* itself and where the horses of the sun get unyoked automatically. Here ten thousand gods are to be seen dwelling together. It is at this crucial point, the seer observes, that he could have the vision of the most luminous one

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12 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत। *Ibid.X.190.1*

13 ऋतेन यावऋतावृधावृतस्य ज्योतिषस्पती। *Ibid., I.23.5*

14 आ विबाध्या परिरापस्तमांसि च ज्योतिष्मन्तं रथमृतस्य तिष्ठसि। *Ibid.,II,23.3.*

of the glorious gods.[15] This state of being is in certain respects inverse of what is given to understand in the third mantra of the hymn of Creation where it is stated that darkness was enshrouded in darkness in the beginning with the water of inconscience pervading all this, and that while the small exterior had kept hidden inside it the all-comprehending one, the latter got manifested by means of the great efficacy of its *tapas*.[16] While in this mantra *Ṛta* is said to be enshrouded in *Ṛta*, in the hymn of Creation darkness is said to be enshrouded in darkness. Secondly, while in this mantra the Supreme Being is seen in excellence of a multitude of gods, in the hymn of Creation the all-comprehending Being is said to lie concealed within something insignificant and manifesting itself from it by means of its *tapas*. This inversion in the two accounts, though akin to each other otherwise, suggests that they probably refer to two poles of one and the same Reality, the primeval and the ultimate, using the imagery of the rising and setting of the same sun as symbols of the respective states of the Being. In the hymn of Creation, since the premise is to discover the beginning of things in its most primeval form, the seer, after negating the possibility of both, being and non-being and of time and space as such in abstruse philosophical terms, circumvents to image out the whole situation in terms of densest possible darkness of night enclosing within its flimsiness of being the mighty splendour of the sun rising up by virtue of its own light and heat. In the mantra under consideration, on the other hand, the same Reality has been sought to be imaged out as available to the human consciousness from amidst the colossal scenario of the world. Here the seer *Śrutavit* wades through the world as impinging on his consciousness and observes across it the Supreme Being getting drawn to himself things in the world in their enormous diversity of forms and functions, culminating ultimately in withdrawing his *Ṛta* itself to himself. On account of its seeming kindredness, this mighty experience of the seer could be brought out most notably by the image of the setting sun withdrawing all its thousands of rays to itself and being visible ultimately in its bare orb.

This interpretation gets confirmation from an instance of the use of the same imagery in the *Īśa Upaniṣad*. Here, at first, the seer recounts how the mouth of the Truth has been covered by a golden lid so that its real

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15 ऋतेन ऋतमपिहितं ध्रुवं वां सूर्यस्य यत्र विमुचन्त्यश्वान्।
दश शता सह तस्थुस्तदेकं देवानां श्रेष्ठं वपुषामपश्यम्।। *Ibid., V.62.1*

16 तम आसीत् तमसा गूलहमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम्।
तुच्छ्येनाभ्वपिहितं यदासीत् तपसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम्।। *Ibid., X.129.3*

voice is scarcely audible to us or its real content is seldom available to us. The golden lid, indeed, is the fascination of the worldly life, which spares us little time and energy to devote to the ultimate source of our being. While in this first half of the mantra the imagery of the pot and its golden lid has been used, in the second half the seer comes round to the original form of the solar orb being surrounded by its multitude of rays and rendering it thus almost invisible. In fact, in the first half also the vessel of truth having its mouth covered by the golden lid is none else than the same solar orb itself but that point has been left rather covert there. In the second half of the mantra also only a part of the imagery gets disclosed through the use of the word *Pūṣaṇ*, meaning apparently the sun.[17] The real disclosure, however, is made in the next mantra where *Pūṣaṇ* has been addressed not only as a seer, *Yama* and *Prājāpatya* but also directly as *Sūrya* and has been prayed to withdraw his rays as well as the bewildering light and heat to himself so that the seer may be in a position to see the deity's most auspicious form and discover his own identity therein.[18] If the second mantra were not preceded by the first one and were also not to have added to it the last clause bearing the ultimate oneness of the individual with the universal or indeed with the Ultimate, one could easily have mistaken it as referring barely to the physical sun and praying to it to withdraw its rays and heat so that the seer might get relief from the scorching sun and its heat.

In the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, which forms the source of the *Īśa Upaniṣad*, the content of these two mantras is found compressed only in one mantra having the first half of the first mantra and the last clause of the second mantra as its second half, with the addition of *aditya* to it.[19] The Upaniṣadic version, thus, seems to be an expanded form of it. As is evident from the Yajurvedic mantra, here also it is the sun which has been taken as the vessel containing the Truth and having its mouth covered with the golden lid standing for the multitude of rays emitted by it. That truth, according to the mantra, lies in the realisation of his identity with the Supreme by the individual. By virtue of harbouring the

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17 हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये।। *Īśa Up.15*

18 पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजः।
यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरूषः सोऽहमस्मि।। *Ibid.,16*

19 हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
योऽसावादित्ये पुरूषः सोऽसावहम्।
ओ३म् खं ब्रह्म। *Yajurveda 40.17*

solar *Puruṣa*, representing the Supreme within it, the sun is symbolic of the Supreme also. In the *Upaniṣad* both the symbol and the symbolised content, however, have been recounted in a rather more elaborate form. But the basic stuff of the symbolism is present in the *Samhitā* also, though in a rather cryptic form.

The same is the case with the Rgvedic mantra seen by seer *Śrutavit* and symbolising the seer's realisation of the Supreme through the image of the setting sun. Had this mantra not used in it the imagery of *Ṛta* getting enshrouded in *Ṛta*, the rest of the details, in spite of including a clear reference to the most splendid amongst the gods, might have been mistaken as a description of the physical sun in its phase of setting in the evening. Notwithstanding the use of the word *Ṛta* even, *Sāyaṇa* could not make out of the mantra any sense other than that it is an account of the rays of the sun having absorbed in them a certain volume of water and covering with it its orb. He, thus, reduces the whole vision to the phenomenon of the formation of cloud and the sun's getting concealed itself within it. This is a glaring instance of the misunderstanding of the real thrust of ideas in the Veda due to confusion between the symbol and the idea symbolised. Misunderstanding of such a paramount principle as *Ṛta* as simply water forming the cloud might have been of some use in rendering the Veda in terms of sacrifice where water happens to be used as a means of purification, but it has done enormous disservice in the understanding of the real sense desired by the seer to be brought home to the reader.

To return to the symbolism of the rising and setting sun, it must by this time be noted that the rising sun has been used by the Vedic seer as a symbol of cosmic creation emerging out of darkness compounded. This contention gets positively supported by the well known *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn where immediately after *Ṛta* and *Satya* it is night which is said to have come into being.[20] Since, as per the central Vedic idea expressed succinctly by the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, the Creator has always maintained his presence in his creation by virtue of having entered into it by way of creating it,[21] the Supreme Creator must be present in the Night also he created immediately after *Ṛta* and *Satya*. That presence of the Supreme during the Night can very well be symbolised by the sun emerging out of darkness of the night itself.

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20 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत। ततो रात्र्यजायत ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः। *RV.X.190.1*

21 तत् सृष्टवा तदेवानुप्राविशत्। । *Tait.Up.II.3.6*

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Uṣas is closely associated with the sun as a source of light. Now when the sun comes to be used very much symbolically in the Veda, can it not be expected that *Uṣas* also might have played a similar role? The rationale of such a usage of it can be traced in a significant mantra seen by *Vasistha*. In the mantra concerned he refers to the long tradition of seers who discovered secret light and have generated the dawns. He regards these seers as so much elevated in their position by virtue of acting in accordance with the provisions of *Ṛta* as to delight joyfully drinking *Soma* in the company of gods. The reason behind their elevation and rejoicing was simply their having been successful in getting disclosed to them the secret light. This light was manifest to them following the emergence of a number of dawns.[1] Dawns have been associated with the sun in the plural as well as in the singular. Thus there is no doubt about it that the account may look realistic and fairly well applicable to the physical world. But in that case, how to explain the secretness of the light, the truthful effectiveness of the mantras possessed by the seers by virtue of which they generate the dawns and their acting intimately in accordance with the principle of *Ṛta*? The actual night has the sun as well as the dawn hidden in it. But manifestation of them out of the night is a physical certainty as firm as any. Whether there is a prophet to predict it or not or a seer to see it or not, they cannot but manifest themselves at the fixed point of time. This must always have been a certainty with mankind, howsoever an ignorant state of mind he might have been in his developmental history. The Vedic seer's account of them as a secret light, therefore, must carry a meaning other than sheer rising of physical dawn and the sun. It has got to be treated as entirely figurative. But figurative in what direction? That is to be determined by the canon of personae involved in the act of seeing. They, as per the account of the mantra concerned, are treaders of the path of *Ṛta* and perfectly truthful in their contemplation, ideation and expression. That is to say, they are fully established in the principles of *Ṛta* and *Satya* which, as has already been explained, are the most cardinal elements of the Vedic cosmology. Since *Ṛta* and *Satya* are the first principles to have got manifested out of the primeval conflagration arising out of the tapas of the Supreme Being, full

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1 त इद्देवानां सधमाद आसन्नृतावानः कवयः पूर्व्यासः।
गूल्हं ज्योतिः पितरो अन्वविन्दन्त्सत्यमन्त्रा अनजयन्नुषासम्।। *RV. VII. 76.4*

establishment of a sagacious person like the seer in them is sure to have resulted in his seeing the preface of that conflagration and eventually the conflagration itself. Thus, while the hidden light of the mantra is the vision of the conflagration itself, the dawns the seers are said to have generated are the successive stages of illumination they came across prior to coming to have the actual vision. The perfection of the language the seer is speaking in, the preciseness of his account in regard to the established cosmological viewpoint in the Veda and the high regard he has for his forefathers whom the vision concerned has been attributed to, vindicate to the utmost seriousness and sacredness of the content of the mantra rather than to its referring to the frivolous idea of the rising of the dawn and the sun coming to the primitive man so ignorant as not to have understood that the day succeeds the night along with the emergence of the dawn and the rising of the sun. To try to explain the account in terms of fading memory of the Vedic Āryans concerning their forefathers having dwelt in the Arctic region some centuries back is confusion confounded at its worst.

That this light is connected with the dawn and the sun only symbolically and by no means actually is evident from a number of mantras bearing reference to light without any direct involvement of the dawn and the sun. For instance, there is a mantra seen by the *Saptarşis* in which the light manifesting itself to the enlightened forefathers, namely the *Āṅgirasas*, is described as the glory of *Indra* which redeemed living beings of the darkness. In the second half of the mantra again, it is pointed out as delivered by the forefathers and coming down to the seer concerned and as having made possible for others to see the wide path of liberality and efficiency in the illumination created by it.[2] Association of the light with *Indra* in place of the dawn and the sun is not abstraction upon the tangible natural phenomenon but a non-figurative account of almost the actual vision of the seer. As has already been determined, *Indra* is the principle or agency of the higher luminous Mind receiving the light of the Supreme and bringing it down to the understanding of human beings. Characterisation of the glorious light here in the mantra as the glory of *Indra*, therefore, is something like associating a particular scientific discovery with the name of the scientist concerned. That this light has not been able as yet to set all the creatures free of darkness may be treated as not to matter much in actuality, since it has all the possibility of being effective that way in course of time. The seer, thus, means to say that the

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2 आविरभून् महि माघोनमेषां विश्वं जीवं तमसो निरमोचि।
महि ज्योतिः पितृभिर्दत्तमागादुरुः पन्था दक्षिणाया अदर्शि। ।Ibid, X.107.1

glorious light has been found out by the *Āṅgirasas* and that, no matter at whatever point in time, it is by recourse to that light that living beings can redeem themselves of the ignorance of life. The light coming down through the tradition and showing the wide path of liberality and efficiency, as the seer points out in the second half of the mantra, cannot be the physical dawn and the sun since they are too big to be supposed to have been handed over by human fathers, nor can it be the fire since the latter is inadequate to have been taken as capable of setting all free of darkness. In all probability, therefore, it can only be the light of the knowledge of the Supreme as it alone is capable of making all living beings see the right path of liberality and efficiency in life. The message involved in the mantra is, thus, more or less the same as has been communicated through the famous Yajurvedic mantras asking all to treat the world as the abode of the Supreme and as such to remain detached, honest, liberal and active throughout the whole life of hundred years, if redemption out of it is aspired for.[3]

There is another mantra seen by *Ayāsya Āṅgirasa* in which the factor responsible for creating division in the gestalt of the Reality is described as the bridge of falsehood as well as the cave keeping concealed inside it a group of three cows; two lying below and one above. While intending to dispel the darkness by means of light, *Brhaspati*, it is stated, has brought the three cows out of the enclosure.[4] Without going into the symbolism of the cave and the number of cows kept concealed there what is germane at the moment to point out is that the light *Brhaspati* is said to have brought down to dispel the darkness is the light of *Ṛta* and Truth calculated to dismantle the bridge of falsehood which is responsible for allowing falsehood and evil to prevail in this world. The light calculated to dismantle the bridge of falsehood, therefore, must be the supernal wisdom of spirituality referred to so just symbolically.

Next to the sun, fire is another fundamental luminary referred to frequently in the Veda. It is the essential means of sacrifice. It is by offering oblation in fire that sacrifice is performed. What is relevant to examine here is whether fire in the Veda, as a luminary, is symbolic or not.

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3 *Yajurveda 40.1-2*

4 अवो द्वाभ्यां पर एकया गा गुहा तिष्ठन्तीरनृतस्य सेतौ।
बृहस्पतिस्तमसि ज्योतिरिच्छन्नुदुस्रा आकर्वि हि तिस्र आवः। । *RV.X.67.4*

There is no doubt about it that fire is a veritable source of light. Its efficacy as a source of light has very nicely been recorded in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in course of the conversation between sage *Yājñavalkya* and King *Janaka*. On *Janaka* asking about the most conveniently available source of light, the sage points out to the sun. When the King asks as to the source of light in the absence of the sun, the sage refers to the moon. What serves as the source of light when the moon also is not there, being brought to this point of query, the sage refers to fire.[5] Apparently fire, as available on this earth, is a product of the sun, as is also the moon along with her light. But a deeper view of things, as held out by modern science, particularly by astronomy and astrophysics, tells us that the sun itself is a product of the primeval ball of fire exploding at a certain moment and sending its sparks all around it. It is these sparks which, science tells us, have assumed the form of clusters, galaxies and stars, our sun being one of them. Interestingly enough, the Vedic seer evinces his peculiar understanding of this larger view of fire also. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by *Viśvāmitra*, unmistakable reference has been made to the lustre of fire pervading the heaven, the earth, the vegetations, the waters as well as to what is responsible for having given expansion to the interstellar space.[6] While cognisance of the presence of fire in the universe including the heaven and the earth, bears out the universality of the area of its pervasion, the idea of its singularity in giving expansion to the interstellar space gives vent to its role in the creation of the universe itself. This is something amazing in view of the extremely ancient and pre-scientific age of the Vedic seer who even then could have such a significant vision which has come to coincide with the universally accepted up-to-date theory about the origin of the universe.

A still more surprising piece of wisdom embedded in this mantra is the description of fire as a turbulent ocean as well as having an eye capable of seeing men along with their deeds etc. If we read this part of the account given in the mantra in the light of the cosmological order of things made out in the well known *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn, what we realise is that the turbulent ocean of the mantra is most possibly the same as the *arṇava* of that hymn.[7] In confirmation of this equation may also be adduced a

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5 *Brh.Up.3.1-4*

6 अग्ने यत्ते दिवि वर्चः पृथिव्यां यदोषधीष्वप्स्वा यजत्र।
येनान्तरिक्षमुर्वाततन्थ त्वेषः स भानुरर्णवो नृचक्षाः।। *RV.III.22.2*

7 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत।
ततो रात्र्यजायत ततः समुद्रोऽर्णवः।। *Ibid.X.190.1*

significant mantra seen by *Trita Āptya* which accords to fire as high a position in the order of Creation as next only to *Ṛta* and *Satya*. According to it, the primeval Non-existence and Existence lie in the highest heaven, in the birth of *Dakṣa* and the lap of *Aditi*, while *Agni* is the first product of *Ṛta* having acted as the cow and the bull both prior to emergence of living beings.[8] Moreover, according to the hymn, time itself is a product of this turbulent ocean of fire.[9] Since space is correlative to time, it also ought to have emerged only following the birth of the turbulent ocean of fire. If so, we can safely presume the non-spatio-temporal character of the fire envisioned by the seer.

This conclusion has a significant bearing on the understanding of the nature of fire as spelled out in *Viśvāmitra's* mantra as having an eye capable of seeing men along with their deeds etc. This obviously refers to the role of fire as the conscience or a state of the higher consciousness embedded in man. It is by virtue of that state of consciousness represented by fire, that man, though a late and flimsy product of that fire itself, could understand the mystery of creation extending infinitely much beyond his reach as a matter of fact. Indeed, fire, in its reach beyond time and space, turns out to be a state of consciousness. While spatial extension and temporal continuance are a binding on the physical, they become inoperative in regard to consciousness. Accordingly, fire, while operative under the principles of time and space, assumes the form of the universe, it, working independently of those principles, acts as consciousness itself, no matter in whatever phase of it.

It can explain very well the profound vision of *Agni* coming to seer *Bharadvāja* in a hymn addressed to *Vaiśvānara*. The hymn opens with the mighty vision of the universe as a vast arena of light and shade inter-playing each other in the alternation of day and night forming the background of the action of *Agni Vaiśvānara* as a luminary.[10] The mystery is so stupendous .that it is only the son of the seer and not the seer himself who is supposed to be capable of explaining its warp and woof as well as the art of weaving involved in it.[11] This son is symbolic of the fire

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8 असच्च संच्च परमे व्योमन् दक्षस्य जन्मन्नदितेरुपस्थे।
अग्निर्ह नः प्रथमजा ऋतस्य पूर्व आयुनि वृषभश्च धेनुः।। *Ibid.,X.5.7*

9 समुद्रादर्णवादधि संवत्सरोऽजायत। *Ibid.,X.190.2*

10 अहश्च कृष्णमहरर्जुनं च वि वर्तेते रजसी वेद्याभिः।
वैश्वानरो जायमानो न राजाऽवातिरज्ज्योतिषाग्निस्तमांसि।। *Ibid., VI.9.1*

11 नाहं तन्तुं न वि जानाम्योतुं न यं वयन्ति समरेऽतमानाः।
कस्य स्वित् पुत्र इह वक्त्वानि परो वदात्यवरेण पित्रा।। *Ibid.,VI.9.2*

itself as consciousness growing out of the physical, its another aspect. As the son grows out of the father, even so, in this universe, consciousness grows out of the physical. The physical is lower while the consciousness is higher. The same Reality becomes the physical in its lower manifestation while consciousness in its higher one, when, of course, getting restored to its original form, that is, consciousness. The physical is the consciousness itself getting objectified through its expansion in space and continuation in time. Wherever it gets restored to its original form after being redeemed of the shackles of time and space, it resumes the form of consciousness. The sameness of the two is evident in the vision of *Bharadvāja* in his characterisation of the same reality as lower in its manifestation, *caran*, and higher in its seeing, *paśyan*. Objectification is the pre-condition of manifestation while restoration to the original sameness is necessary for acting as the seer. Since it is the physical which gives rise to consciousness in this universe, it has been symbolised by the father of the latter in the mantra concerned. It is this fire of consciousness emerging out of the fire-sticks symbolising the physical which, as the son, is taken by the seer as capable of explaining the warp and woof of the universe. This observation of the seer is proving prophetic more and more emphatically today when a flimsy product of the universe, as man is, is getting closer and closer to unveiling the mystery of creation in the form of the same fire working diversely on all planes of being: as the object on the lower and as the subject on the higher, physicality and consciousness being the characteristic features of them respectively. It is the physical, which is called father by the seer while it is consciousness which is called the son, the relationship of the father and the son having been adopted by the seer as symbolic of the relationship between the physical and the consciousness as obtaining in the universe we live in.

It is this fire as consciousness, which forms the central theme of the next mantra in the hymn. It is described as the immortal light lying inside the mortals as the eternal presence. It, as consciousness, is categorically different from the actual light and yet due to its luminosity, though of a different order, it has been visualised as kindred to that light. This is the basis of its symbolisation by the latter.

That the light referred to in these mantras is undoubtedly symbolic is evident from the extra-spatio-temporal character of it. It, on the one hand, has been recounted as pervasive and illuminative of the entire universe and, on the other, as existing as the eternally constant light inside the individual, running faster than the mind and being bowed to by all the

gods together.[12] It is a matter of common knowledge now that light has a velocity of 300000 k.m. per second as discovered by scientists. Almost the same velocity of it was known to the Vedic seer also. From the viewpoint of the Vedic seer, however, it is not light but mind which is the fastest of everything in the world. When the velocity of this light is considered as faster than that of mind even, it automatically crosses over the barrier of time and space. As such, it must be entirely different from the physical light with the limitation of its velocity well within the bounds of space and time. If even then it is described as a light, that must be only symbolically and by no means actually. It, indeed, is the same light which subsequently in the *Upaniṣads*, particularly in the *Chāndogya* , has been described as a light spreading its luminosity beyond the heaven, at the back of everything in the highest as well as the lowest of the worlds and yet obtaining in the inmost being of the individual.[13]

It is only such light which is worthy of being worshipped by gods and by no means the sheer physical light, by virtue of being centres or embodiments of the consciousness much higher than the human. There is a positive reference to such a light in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also. According to it, gods worship that immortal light which operates in transcendence of the round of the year along with the alternation of days and nights taking place within it.[14]

Next to *Agni*, *Soma* is another source of light delineated in considerable detail in the Veda. As regards the sun and the fire, their working as the sources of light even in utmost physical terms is quite evident. But how *Soma* as a creeper or its juice can act as a source of light, is not understandable literally. It was particularly in view of this difficulty that *Hillebrandt* came to the equation of the Vedic *Soma* with the moon in his voluminous *Vedische Mythologie*. Needless to point out that the word *soma* subsequently became established as a synonym of the moon also. One would like to remind ourselves of the conversation of sage *Yājñavalkya* and King *Janaka* referred to earlier in this continuation where it was positively the moon which was referred to as a source of light in the absence of the sun.

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12 *Ibid., VI.9.4-6*

13 अथ यदतः परो दिवा ज्योतिर्दीप्यते विश्वतः पृष्ठेषु अनुत्तमेषूत्तमेषु
लोकेष्विदं वाव तद्यदिदमस्मिन्नन्तः पुरूषे ज्योतिः । *Chan. Up. III. 13.7*

14 यस्मादर्वाक् संवत्सरोऽहोभिः परिवर्तते ।
तद्देवा ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरायुर्होपासतेऽमृतम् । । *Brh. Up. IV. 4.16*

But all this evidence apart, what is significant to note is that Soma in the Veda has been regarded as a notable source of light most prominently even as the juice of a certain creeper. To illustrate the point, there is a significant mantra seen by *Pragātha* in which he on behalf of a group of persons as well as himself observes how they have taken *Soma*, have become immortal, have reached the light and have come to the proximity of gods to the extent that no more are they vulnerable to enmity and destructive or deceptive propensity of the mortals.[15] Here there is no doubt about *Soma* being referred to as a drink which being taken up makes the seer and his party see the peculiar light which is co-eval to the sense of immortality, proximity of gods and invulnerability to enmity and deception of the mortals. To interpret this absolutely clear account of *Soma* in any sense other than the drink would be a travesty of facts of the worst variety. As such, the symbolic character of light referred to in this mantra is a certainty. As is evident from the account, this light must be of spiritual nature. It cannot be that of any ordinary sort either. To take the *Soma* as simply a narcotic stimulant will also not do in the context. While the effect of any such stimulant is temporary, the effect of this *Soma* has a certain sense of permanence associated with it. Qualitatively also it is entirely different from what any narcotic drug known so far is capable of producing. Here, as the mantra bears out, the drinker of the *Soma* comes to have a definite sense of satisfaction and fulfilment of the highest order equivalent to the final beatitude. Moreover, while the effect of the intoxicant, drug, etc. results either in depression or degradation and moral turpitude in the person concerned, the effect of *Soma* makes him rise above the sense of enmity bearing out real expansion and elevation in his consciousness. His rising above destructibility and deception is indicative of his spectacular elevation in the scale of wisdom. Such a consciousness cannot but be supremely luminous and transformatory. It seems particularly due to its luminosity that it has been indicated by the symbol of light in the mantra concerned.

But to suppose the kindredness of this light to the physical one does not seem to suffice particularly in view of the seer's direct experience of illumination as recounted by him. While any light used in the secondary sense, which is a binding for its being symbolic in its usage, would be a light by inference, the light referred to in this mantra is so as a matter of

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15 अपाम सोममृता अभूमागन्म ज्योतिरविदाम देवान्।
किं नूनमस्मान् कृणवदरातिः किमु धूर्तिरमृत मर्त्यस्य। । *RV. VIII. 48. 3*

direct experience, obviously not on the sensory level but on a level higher than even the inferential. Thus we come across a third level of the possibility of the experience of light which may be characterised as intuitive lying above the sensory and the inferential. While light seen on the sensory level is actual, and one visualised on the inferential level is symbolic, that experienced on the supra-inferential level is intuitive. While the actual light is seen by only one of the senses, light on the intuitive level is *seen* by the total being of the seer. As such, though shorn of the crudeness of the sensory, it must be immensely much more vivid, transformative and fulfilling than the sensory. This is what the account of the seer powerfully bears out. He, as a result of drinking *Soma*, sees a peculiar light not anywhere outside but within himself which proves so overwhelming to him as to elevate him from manhood, with all its vulnerability to misery, evil and deception, to the state of divinity as characterised by complete absence of all these propensities.

IV

Light, indeed, is a symbol of a variety of its own inasmuch as over and above other symbols chosen on the basis of their similitude with the objects they are to symbolise, is also a matter of direct experience at the same level as is the experience to be symbolised. This is more clearly evident from its use in regard to *Soma* than anywhere else culminating ultimately in the coincidence of *Soma* with one of the basic sources of physical light, next only to the sun. To illustrate the point, in one of his mantras *Prabhuvasu* prays to *Soma* still in the process of purification to bring to him in its same flow a multitude of wealth by means of which it acquires light for him as well as for others of his kind.[1] Now since the light acquired through Soma is of the variety as discussed above, the multitude of wealth referred to in this mantra cannot afford to differ much from that variety. As is the nature of the light used in discovering something, so must be the nature of the object discovered. If the physical light discovers for us something physical, the spiritual light should make available to us something spiritual.

Some inkling into the nature of the wealth to be discovered and found out in the light of *Soma* can be had from a mantra seen by *Pragātha*. In this mantra, the seer along with many more of his kind, tells us that he prays to *Indra* as truth and by no means as falsehood removed from the path of *Ṛta*. He further points out that one who does not press *Soma*, meets worst death while he, who presses it, has available to him abundant light.[2] By praying to *Indra* as truth implying close sticking to the principle of *Ṛta*, and offering *Soma* to him what the seer can expect is to be established in truth and be inclined to follow the principle of *Ṛta*. This state of things is indicated in the second half of the mantra as abundant light while the inverse of it as worst death.

This point is made more explicit in another mantra seen by *Vaikhānasas*. In this mantra the flowing Soma has been described as great *Ṛta*,

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1 आ नः पवस्व धारया पवमान रयिं पृथुम्।
यया ज्योतिर्विदासि नः। *RV.IX.35.1*

2 सत्यमिद् वा उ तं वयमिन्द्रं स्तवाम नानृतम्।
भहॉ असुन्वतो वधो भूरि ज्योतिषि सुन्वतो भद्रा इन्द्रस्य रातयः।। *Ibid., III.62.12*

generating lustrous light and dispelling black darkness.[3] If the flowing Soma stands for the dynamics of *Ṛta*, the light it generates must be the light of truth far removed from falsehood and working in perfect concurrence with *Ṛta*.

It gets further confirmation from another mantra seen by *Kaśyapa Mārīća*. In this mantra, the truth of the flowing *Soma* has been characterised as the state of things fulfilling to the seers of the mantras universally. It is the light of the higher world made available as tangibly as the daylight by virtue of which mankind is saved of his abysmal fall into the demonic nature while the demonic has been obstructed from rising to the human and the divine intending to corrupt them.[4] In yet another mantra, the juice of the flowing *Soma* is described as the luminous efficiency as well as the universally available light capable of making one see the heaven.[5] Another Rgvedic mantra describes it as a light worth speaking about by seers.[6]

On the testimony of all such accounts it is clear that *Soma*, as envisioned in the Veda, is a light and yet far from the physical one. It is highly spiritual. It is the light of Truth and *Ṛta* as operative in the universe. The drink, if any, in the real sense of the term, is only a stimulant for landing one in the world of light of the real *Soma*. This is what can be inferred from *Sūrya's* observation that the drinker of *Soma* takes as *Soma* simply the squeeze of the creeper but the real *Soma* as understood by the knowers of the Reality cannot be taken as a food or drink by anyone.[7] That world of light cannot be taken as simply an extension of the physical. While all lights in the physical world suffer from fluctuations and attenuations, the world *Soma* lands one in is illuminated by immortal light. It is heavenly as contrasted to the earthly.

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3 पवमान ऋतं बृहच्छुकं ज्योतिरजीजनत्।
कृष्णा तमांसि जंघनत्। *Ibid.,IX.66.24*

4 तन्नु सत्यं पवमानस्यास्तु यत्र विश्वे कारव संनसन्त।
ज्योतिर्यदह्ने अकृणोदुलोकं प्रावन्मनुं दस्यवे करभीकम्।। *Ibid., IX.92.5*

5 पवमान रसस्तव दक्षो विराजति द्युमान्।
ज्योतिर्विश्वं स्वर्दृशे।। *Ibid., IX.61.18*

6 ज्योतिर्जज्ञानमुक्थ्यम् *Ibid., IX.29.2*

7 सोमं मन्यते पपिवान् यत् संपिषन्त्योषधीम्।
सोमं यं ब्रह्माणो विदुर्न तस्याश्नाति कश्चन।। *Ibid.,X.85*

This is obvious from seer *Kaśyapa Mārīća's* prayer addressed to *Soma* with the aspiration that the latter may elevate him to that world where there is light immune to diminution, and where the heaven itself is placed.[8] *Soma* as a drink serves as a means to land one in the world of light by dispelling the intervening darkness of ignorance. It is in some such sense alone that we can explain the vision of *Soma* coming to seer *Kaśyapa* and the latter addressing it as an ocean as well as the wise seer knowing all and having within its hold the five directions, bearing the heaven and the earth in each other's relationship and having the sun as just one of the luminaries fed by it.[9] Man has always taken the sun as the feeder of the moon and not *vice versa*. Vedic seer's holding *Soma* as the feeder of the sun annuls decisively as the possibility of *Soma* being the same as the moon, as has been sought to be proved by *Hillebrandt*. *Hillebrandt's* proposition gets further annulled by seer *Samyu's* vision recounting *Soma* as one who has made the Dawns worthy wives, has fed the sun with light, has placed the heaven, the earth and the intermediate space in their respective places, and has found out the juice of immortality kept concealed inside the trinity of the worlds.[10]

The principle which is supposed to be responsible for feeding with light the luminaries like the sun, cannot be an ordinary source of light whatever. Since the light of the luminaries of the category of the sun has made the universe what it is, the light of *Soma* must be taken as the primary cause of the universe. This conclusion gets further confirmation from *Soma* being described as sustainer of the trinity of the worlds as well as that of the five directions, that is the entire space. It can do so only by transcending space as such. By virtue of being described as the juice of immortality, it must transcend time also. As observed earlier, it has also been characterised as Truth and *Ṛta*. Thus *Soma* in the Veda is a light lying in transcendence of space and time and being more or less the same as *Satya* and *Ṛta*, the most primary principles of the creative dynamics of the Creator. It is only in this capacity that it can accomplish all what has been attributed to it by the seers.

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8 यत्र ज्योतिरजस्रं यस्मिन् लोके स्वर्हितम्।
तस्मिन् मां धेहि पवमानामृते लोके।। *Ibid.,IX.113.7*

9 त्वं समुद्रो असि विश्ववित् कवे तवेमाः पञ्च प्रदिशो विधर्मणि।
त्वं द्यां च पृथिवीं चाति जभ्रिषे तव ज्योतीषि पवमान सूर्यः।। *Ibid.,IX.86.29*

10. अयमकृणोदुषसः सुपत्नीरयं सूर्ये अदधाज्ज्योतिरन्तः ।
अयं त्रिधातु दिवि रोचनेषु त्रितेषु विन्ददमृतं निगूळहम् ।। *Ibid.,VI.44.23*

Over and above all this, its peculiar role in the universal dynamics can be determined on the basis of the mantra quoted above last. To remind ourselves of the part of it relevant on the point at the moment, here *Soma* has been described as the finder of the juice of immortality kept concealed within the trinity of the worlds, that is the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven. It implies that had *Soma* not been there in the world, the latter would have been very much deficient in that juice which is responsible for the sense of continuity in the it as well as the joy of living which keeps the continuity sustained. What can such a significant juice be?

An inkling into the problem involved on the point may be had by referring to the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad's* well-known passage defining the Ultimate Reality in terms of a certain juice. By getting the taste of this juice, the *Upaniṣad* observes, everyone feels rejoiced in this world. In support of its contention that it is some sort of joy, felt in howsoever attenuated a measure, which keeps life sustained here, the *Upaniṣad* observes in the same continuation that it would have been impossible for anyone to have kept alive remaining sustained in breathing, had that joy of living not been there to live upon.[11] Needless to point out that it is the idea of *rasa* as formulated here in this singular passage which has formed the basis of the concept of *rasa* as prevailing so eminently in Indian poetics denoting the extraordinary or rather transcendental sense of delight produced in the mind of the spectator of a dramatic performance, student of a piece of poetry or indeed peruser of any right type of literary or artistic creation. At the same time, it needs to be pertinently observed that the idea of *rasa* formulated in this passage has its basis in the philosophy and cult of *Soma* as enunciated in the Veda and practised by the Vedic people. The Upaniṣadic idea is, indeed, a mere echo of whatever has been said about *Soma* in the Veda so profoundly and elaborately, as is evident from whatever has been detailed out above. To put the basic point succinctly, therefore, *Soma*, besides being the principle of Truth and *Ṛta*, is pre-eminently the principle of Delight as trickling down to this world as well as existing in transcendence of the world.

The light associated with *Soma*, therefore, is symbolic of that ultimate principle of Truth, *Ṛta* and Delight. To be specific, if *rasa* symbolises its aspect of delight, and its significant name *pavamana* its aspect of *Ṛta* or

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11 रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति। को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्याद् यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात्। । *Tait.Up.II.7*

universal dynamics, the word *jyotiş* used for it so frequently stands symbolically for its aspect of Truth which leads the aspirant ultimately to the world of eternal luminosity.

Soma has several times been described as *indriya rasa* which normally is translatable as the juice offered preponderantly to *Indra*. But, at the same time, at least from the Upanişadic viewpoint, it may also be understood as the juice sensed by the organs of sense and action. As a matter of fact, it no doubt is a juice relished by one of the sense organs, that is the organ of taste. But, since, in the Veda, the function of anyone of the sense organs is prone to be used in the generic sense of that of all the sense organs, the same may hold equally good in regard to *Soma* also. From that viewpoint, *Indra* may be treated as the central agency whom all the sense organs pay their respective tribute in the form of sensations. On the evidence already produced in course of these lectures, *Indra* may very well be equated with what seer *Dirghatamas* has termed as *devam manas*, the divine mind lying above the earthly. It is significant to note that the earthly mind has been counted as one of the sense organs, the sixth one over and above the five usual ones. Thus the earthly mind also may be taken as a tributary of *Indra*, the divine mind. As such, *Soma* as *indriya rasa*, comes around to stand for the entire sense datum as co-ordinated by the sense-mind and offered to the higher or divine mind receiving it in the allegorical form of *Indra*. Thus the objects in the outside world are the *Soma* creepers, as it were, the juice of whom is extracted in the form of sensations, gets purified by the sense mind through the latter's function of co-ordination and refinement and then is offered to *Indra*, the divine mind. If the person concerned uses the *Soma* juice symbolically in offering it to *Indra*, he is supposed to get the heaven which is the world of illumination. If, on the other hand, he takes it himself in the name of *Indra*, it, being received through the organ of taste, reaches eventually the higher mind coinciding with the same world of illumination called heaven. Since, apart from the specific offering and drinking of a special kind of squash called *Soma*, this process of transformation of the gross object into the subtle sense-datum, and of the latter into the luminous or higher consciousness is going on universally, *Soma* is described as a universal principle of purification, *pavamāna* and illumination, *jyotir vaiśvānaram*.[12]

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12 पवमानो अजीजनद्दिवश्चित्रं न तन्यतुम्।
ज्योतिर्वैश्वानरं बृहत्।। *RV.IX.61,16*

Association of *Indra* with light makes the symbolic character of the latter still clearer. Along with cow and water, light is also one of the principal things he makes manifest by killing *Vṛtra*. As is evident from the discussion on the symbolism of cow, if the latter is so symbolic in the Veda, light also should be equally symbolic there. In one of the mantras seen by *Brhaduktha*, the means by which *Indra* has created the future as well as the past is regarded as a great secret of universal dimensions. This means in the latter half of the mantra is described as his light born of the primeval stage. This light is further characterised as so lovely that all the five lovely gods have settled themselves fully in it.[13] The Vedic seer, does never characterise anything as a `great secret' unless and until it is actually so. This term is used by him particularly for situations of highly cosmogonic nature. This is evident from its further description as *purusprk*, of universal significance. The same gets still further confirmed through attribution to that secret thing the pre-eminent role in the creation of the future as well as the past. Thus the principle which might have been used in the creation of all on universal scale and in its past, present and future cannot but be of primeval significance in the scale of being. Accordingly it has been characterised as *pratna*, primeval. This so significant a factor having played so vital a role in the cosmic creation is nothing but light intimately connected with *Indra* as the basic means by which he accomplished his creative work. In the next mantra, this light is further specified as uniformly one in essence and yet diversified in its application. By means of this light *Indra* is said to have filled up the entire space between the heaven and the earth, the five gods, the seven groups each of seven members as well as the well-known thirty-four gods.[14] Such an all-comprehending principle in terms of time, space and grades of being, must be nothing less than the ultimate and that in the vision of the Vedic seer is what the seer calls alternatively as *Ṛta* and *Satya*. Light is used simply as a symbol of it partly on account of its most fundamental role in the creation of the physical world and partly on account of representing analogously the core of the human psyche responsible for the cognisance of all this. It is particularly in the latter sense that *Indra* is attributed to have made available the light to mankind devoted to extraction of *Soma*, practice of liberality in life and making offering by way

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13 महत्तन्नाम गुह्यं पुरूस्पृग्येन भूतं जनयो येन भव्यम्।
प्रत्नं जातं ज्योतिर्यदस्य प्रियं प्रियाः समविशन्त पञ्च ।। *Ibid.,X.55.2*

14 आ रोदसी अपृणादोत मध्यं पञ्च देवॉ ऋतुशः सप्तसप्त।
चतुस्त्रिंसता पुरूधा विचष्टे सरूपेण ज्योतिषा विव्रतेन।। *Ibid.,X.55.3*

of sacrifice. This light is the brilliant light of lights lying in the golden cask of the inmost being of the individual, and known as the taintless Brahman and capable of being understood only by those enlightened through self-realisation, as the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* puts it.[15] The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* speaks of it still more intimately when it describes the same as an entity indwelling the human psyche in the size of the human thumb and as an absolutely smokeless light controlling the future as well as the past, remaining the same tomorrow as it is today and being essentially identical to the Supreme Being.[16]

The *Maruts* are also prayed sometimes to dispel darkness by means of light. In barely actual sense, they have little to do with light. If their association with light is sought to be explained in terms of fanning of the fire by the air, that would be only farcical. The thrust of ideas embodied in such mantras goes in an entirely different direction. For instance, there is a mantra seen by *Gotama Rāhūgaṇa* in which these deities are prayed to dispel the darkness as it is obnoxious and dissociate all those who are bent upon doing evil. In place of darkness what the seer wishes the *Maruts* to bring in is light.[17] Although explaining the mantra at the first instance in terms of the light of the sun, etc., as befits his sacrificial purpose, *Sāyaṇa* also in his alternative explanation touches the crux of the meaning inasmuch as he takes by the word *guhya* used in the mantra the secrecy of the heart while by darkness the ignorance lying therein. In confirmation of this position, he takes *Atri*, who is sought to be dissociated from the seer, as the eater of his noble deeds. Accordingly, he understands by light, mentioned here, the knowledge used in the realisation of the highest Reality. He goes a step still further in explaining the *Maruts* themselves as those who assume the form of the five *prāṇas*, *i.e.*, *prāṇa, apāna, udāna, vyāna* and *samāna* inside the human body.[18] If this explanation of Sāyaṇa's has any truth in it, the light aspired for so

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15 हिरण्मये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम्।
तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद्यदात्मविदो विदुः ।। *Mund. Up.II.10*

16 अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य य एवाद्य स उ श्वः।। *Kath.Up.IV.13*

17 गूहता गुह्यं तमो वि यात विश्वमत्रिणं ।
ज्योतिष्कर्ता यदुश्मसि ।। *RV.I.86.10*

18 गुह्यं गुहायां शरीरान्तर्गतगुहारूपे हृदये भवं तमो भावरूपाज्ञानम्.....।
अत्रिणं पुरुषार्थस्यात्तारं कामकोधादिकम्.....। यत् तज्ज्योतिः
परतत्वसाक्षात्काररूपं ज्ञानम्। *Sāyaṇa on RV.I.86.10*

eagerly by the seer and his associates is sure to be symbolic on account of having been used in the secondary sense of knowledge capable of removing ignorance in the same way as the physical light removes the actual darkness.

There is another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra* in which the *Maruts* as associates of *Indra* are said to have accompanied the latter as he was engaged in his fight against *Vṛtra* and to have discovered the magnificent light from within the darkness. The dawns of understanding are said to have come to *Indra* following it, as a result of which he is said to have become the lord of the cows.[19] Obviously the dawns of understanding cannot be the physical dawns unless *jānatīh* be taken to have been used here as a transferred epithet. Even then, however, if the seer was capable of using transferred epithets, he cannot be considered to be anyway away from symbolic usage as transferred epithet is just a form of symbolic usage. The dawns of understanding, therefore, may very well be taken to stand for the higher states of consciousness immediately preceding full illumination and following the intuitive insight which *Indra*, in association with the *Maruts*, is said to have discovered for the seer.

The symbolic nature of the light gets further confirmed by the vital role it plays in removing enmity and evil, and correcting the aberrations of character. The dawn, for instance, is said to be respectfully bowed to by the whole world on account of making available the light by means of which she is expected to brush aside enmity and obstructions.[20] Similarly there is another mantra addressed to *Indra* in which it is prayed that there be light around the heaven and the earth so that sacrifice may be performed well and people may be able to keep away from the blemishes of character.[21] If sacrifice needs light for its performance on the one hand, the light generates the sense of sacrifice on the other. This is evident from another mantra seen by *Agastya* in which the *Aśvins* are prayed to see that the non-sacrificing persons are denied respectability in life, and are being surpassed and crushed in spirit on account of being niggardly

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19 अभि जैत्रीरसचन्त स्पृधानं महि ज्योतिस्तमसो निरजानन्।
तं जानतीः प्रत्युदायन्नुषासः पतिर्गवामभवदेक इन्द्रः। *RV.III.31.4*

20 विश्वमस्या नानाम चक्षसे जगज्ज्योतिष्कृणोति सूनरी।
अप द्वेषो मघोनी दुहिता दिव उषा उच्छदप सिधः । *Ibid., I.48.8*

21 ज्योतिर्यज्ञाय रोदसी अनुष्यादारे स्याम दुरितस्य भूरेः। *Ibid.,III.39.8*

and that the sacrificing and worshipful one gets the illumination.[22] The niggardly *Pani* is the custodian of darkness while the sacrificing seer is the aspirant of light. This light brings greater and greater purity in his life. How all this happens is stated clearly in one of the significant mantras seen by *Viśvāmitra*. In this mantra, the seer observes how he started with the purification of himself by making sacrifices to as well as by contemplating on three broad component principles of the universe as well as of himself in the form of fire, air and the sun. This process of purification resulted in the seeing of the light in the form of understanding by the heart. By the self-power, thus evolved, there was made manifest the most brilliant gem of the Self which was sufficient to illuminate the whole of the heaven and the earth from all around.[23]

It is by developing this capability of the Self so as to be able to see the whole of the heaven and the earth together as one integrated whole that one rises to the position of having a glimpse of *Aditi*, the infinity. The vision of *Aditi*, in its turn, makes one free of all sense of sin lurking in his inner being. When the sense of sin gets completely eliminated on account of the vision of *Aditi*, one becomes entitled to attain to the heavenly light of immortality and perfection.[24] It is on account of having been seen through the inner light that *Aditi*, the goddess of infinity, is also conceived as luminous by *Parucchepa*, for instance, when he suggests to the aspirant to meditate on her as the fundamental source of light.[25] Otherwise there is not much relevance in conceiving of the infinity as luminous. The mathematician, for example, has also an idea of the infinity which he uses very often in his thinking. But, since, he conceives of the infinity as a sheer idea reached at by way of mathematical induction and deduction, he cannot but think of it as only an idea expressible through a certain symbolic form but by no means as the source of universal illumination.

The Vedic seer, indeed, is so much enamoured by the inner light he has acquired through sacrifice and *tapas* that he makes use of it very often

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22 किमत्र दस्रा कृणुथः किमासाथे जनो यः कश्चिदहविर्महीयते।
अतिक्रमिष्टं जुरतं पणेरसुं ज्योतिर्विप्राय कृणुतं वचस्यवे।। *Ibid.,I.182.3*

23 त्रिभिः पवित्रैरपुपोद्ध्यर्क हृदा मतिं ज्योतिरनु प्रजानन्।
वर्षिष्ठं रत्नमकृत स्वधाभिरादिद्द्यावापृथिवी पर्यपश्यत्।। *Ibid.,III.26.8*

24 विश्वस्मान्नो अदितिः पात्वंहसो माता मित्रस्य वरुणस्य रेवतः।
स्वर्वज्ज्योतिरवृकं नशीमहि तद्देवानामवो अद्या वृणीमहे।। *Ibid.,X.36.3*

25 ज्योतिष्मतीमदितिं धारयत् क्षितिं। *Ibid.,I.136.3*

in the context of his seeing the mantras even. Being purely verbal in form and that also not committed to writing as yet at that stage, any visible form, much less the luminous one, ought not to have been associated with the Vedic mantras, as a matter of fact. But, contrary to this realistic expectation, what we find in actuality is that there are certain instances where the mantras are not only attributed visible form but are also described as lights. For instance, there is a mantra seen by *Gotama Rāhūgaṇa* in which the *Aśvins* have been attributed the creation of the mantra in the form of a light descending from the heaven.[26] In another mantra seen by *Vasistha*, it has been observed that the group of mantras seen by the *Vasisthas* emit light like the rising sun besides being so deep in profundity as the ocean and so fast in appeal as the wind.[27] Obviously the light of the mantras is used here as coincident to that of the sun. Such coincidence of the spiritual with the physical can be conceived of only symbolically. There is yet another mantra seen by *Vāmadeva* in which in course of recounting the spiritual adventures of *Āṅgirasas* the seer observes that they smashed the mountain while their companions praised them from all around, and while trying to control the animals they, being active inwardly, worshipped *Agni* and found out the light.[28] As is evident from the circumstances, the light obtained by *Āṅgirasas* cannot but be one coming to them as a result of their creation or seeing of the mantras. This interpretation gets further confirmed by another mantra seen by *Vasistha* in which the same *Āṅgirasas* have been said to have obtained spacious light while being absorbed in deep meditation.[29]

To revert to the *Brhadāraṇyaka's* dialogue between sage *Yājñavalkya* and King *Janaka* as referred to earlier, after getting answer to his series of questions regarding the light which serves our purpose in the form of the sun, the moon and *Agni*, the King asks the sage as to what serves as light in the absence of *Agni* also, the sage identifies it as speech. Again, when the King asks him as to what serves as the source of light in the absence of speech even, the sage points out to the Self.[30] Now if the sun, the moon

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26 यावित्था श्लोकमा दिवा ज्योतिर्जनाय चक्रथुः । *Ibid.,I.92.17*

27 सूर्यस्येव वक्षथो ज्योतिरेषां समुद्रस्येव महिमा गभीरः ।
वातस्येव प्रजवो नान्येन स्तोमो वसिष्ठा अन्वेतवे वः । । *Ibid., VII.33.8*

28 ते मर्मृजत ददृवांसो अद्रिं तदेषामन्य अभितो विवोचन् ।
पश्वयन्त्रासो अभिकारमर्चन् विदन्त ज्योतिश्चकृपन्त धीभिः । । *Ibid.,IV.1.14*

29 उच्छन्नुषसः सुदिना अरिप्रा उरूज्योतिर्विविदुर्दीध्यानाः ।
गव्यं चिदूर्वमुशिजो विवव्रुस्तेषामनु प्रदिवः ससुरापः । । *Ibid., VII.90.4.*

30 *Brh.Up.IV.3.5-7*

and the fire are sources of light in the realistic sense, speech and the Self are so symbolically. The Vedic texts elsewhere include in the latter category the mind also. Thus there is perfect correspondence between the two categories, that is the actual and the symbolic, the speech corresponding to *Agni*, mind to the moon and the Self to the sun. This correspondence has very well been marked out by Vedic seers and sages and has been widely utilised by them in giving expression to ideas concerning speech, mind and Self through the symbol of the fire, the moon and the sun. When experiences relating to speech, mind and Self come to be represented by the fire, the moon and the sun or their respective lights, the result is the formation of the symbolism of light. As a matter of fact, speech, mind and Self are the basic points around which the accounts of the Vedic seers mostly revolve, sometimes directly but mostly figuratively. At the same time it is also true that the seer's experiences regarding speech, mind and Self have been expressed through symbols derived from very many sources besides light, as we have already seen. But when light is used as a symbol of these experiences, the account becomes much more transparent than otherwise, to the extent as to create the impression of these accounts being realistic. This transparency of accounts relating to light in the texts has inadvertently created a lot of confusion regarding the real thrust of meaning particularly in the *Samhitās*. It has misled scholars, particularly in the modern times, to believe that the Veda as a whole is basically an accumulation of accounts of experiences of worshippers of light and luminaries in the form of the sun, the moon and the fire. The erroneousness of this conclusion must be quite obvious from the analysis presented here. When the divine or luminous mind itself could be conceived of as the central light behind all lights, as it has been done in the *Yajurveda*, where was the point for the Vedic seer to remain satisfied with the worship of merely the physical light?[31] As a matter of fact, out of the three physical luminaries while *Agni* represents symbolically the consciousness involved in the working of the sense organs, vocal organ and the sense mind and *Soma* and the moon the divine mind, the sun stands for the Self forming the inmost being of the individual. This last point is quite evident from the *Ṛgvedic* reference itself describing the sun as the Self of all, both mobile and immobile.[32]

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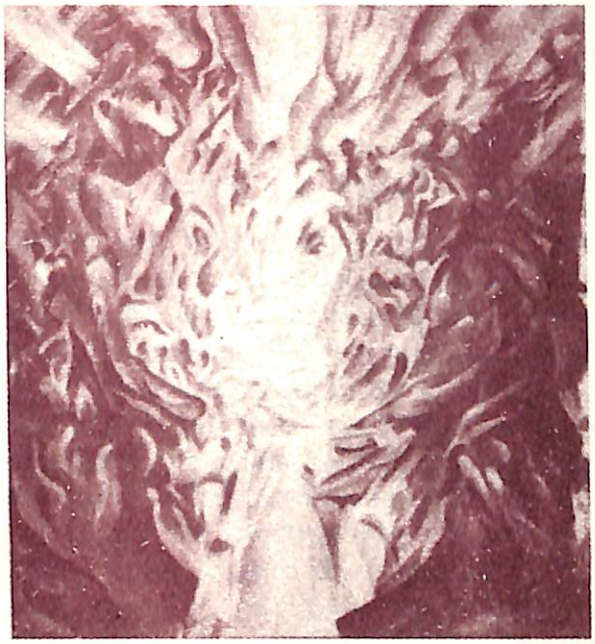
31 यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदैति दैवं तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवैति।
दूरंगमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं तन्मे मनः शिवसकंल्पमस्तु।। *YV.34.1*

32 सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च। *RV.I.115.1*



Sacrifice

1

Vedic texts are closely connected with the idea, performance and institution of sacrifice. Hardly are there any mantras, much less hymns, which do not have any element of sacrifice embodied in them. Even the very first mantra of the *Ṛgveda* is a prayer to *Agni* in which the latter has been addressed as the priest as well as the deity of the sacrifice. There is another mantra in it in which the specific use of the four *Samhitās* in course of sacrifice has been clearly indicated. According to it, the Rgvedic mantras are used in the invocation of the gods, the Sāmavedic mantras are used in laying stress on those invocations, the Yajurvedic mantras are used in the actual act of performance while the mantras from the *Atharvaveda* have their relevance in the supervision of the whole act of performance.[1] In fact, it is due to this closeness of the relationship between the two that *Sāyaṇa*, the greatest of the commentators on the Vedic texts has interpreted them mostly in sacrificial terms suggesting thereby that the Vedic mantras were even seen with performance of sacrifice as the end in view. There is much truth also in this approach provided we look upon performance of sacrifice as an end in itself. According to it, since the seers had to see that the institution of sacrifice was placed on a permanent footing, they saw the mantras for their use in the context of sacrificial performance.

But, when we read the Vedic texts, particularly the *Ṛgveda*, the oldest and most comprehensive one among them, keeping apart any such pre-supposition, what we find is that the mantras were seen not exactly for their use in the sacrificial context but partly out of the curiosity for knowing the nature of things and partly out of great regard for the unseen forces termed as gods and goddesses including the one Supreme Being supervening over them all. It is by way of paying their homage to these agencies for letting them enter into the nature of things as well as making their lives successful in other respects also that the seers, instead of remaining contented with just prayers, proceed further in the direction of giving practical shape to those prayers.

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1 ऋचां त्वः पोषमास्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्वो गायति शक्वरीषु।
ब्रह्मा त्वो वदति जातविद्यां यज्ञस्य मात्रां वि मिमीत उ त्वः।। *RV.X.71.11*

In the history of sacrifice as traced by *James George Frazer* in his monumental work entitled *The Golden Bough*, what we find is that this cult is one of the most primary manifestations of the religious sensibility of man, something as fundamental as the inclination of the child to play. Needless to mention that the child is not conscious at all of any motive behind its act of playing at least at the primary level. It is only subsequently that he may become aware of the motive in terms of physical and mental development as also of financial gains. This is more or less what happened in the case of the institution of sacrifice. At the primitive level, this institution works as almost an unconscious function of the religious sensibility of man for his personal welfare at the most.

In the Veda, however, things have developed far above this primary stage. Here the seer is concerned not so much with his personal welfare as with the welfare of the whole of mankind or even with that of all living beings around him. Getting so much awakened and elevated in his consciousness, no more does he remain unconscious regarding his inclination to sacrifice also. As a result, sacrifice does by no means remain an unconscious inclination in him clouded by limited self-interest. It has got enlightened and enlarged to universal proportions. With such elevation and enlargement in the consciousness and the consequent outlook towards life, the practices of the earlier stage have come to bear a secondary sense to him which is the most fundamental characteristic of symbolic usage distinguishing it from the realistic one. While the child's play is an end in itself, that of the adult is a means to a certain end quite distinct from the play itself, no matter be it in terms of physical and mental health and development or financial gain. Similarly while the primitive man performs sacrifices just out of certain beliefs concerning his limited sense of security and gain, thinking as if what he is offering to the deity concerned is being availed of actually and mostly in the same form, the Vedic seer performs the sacrifice and makes offerings to the divine simply as a token of his deeper understanding of his intimacy with the divine.

That to the Vedic seer sacrifice is not just a mode of worship picked up arbitrarily by mankind to propitiate certain imaginary beings but something ingrained in the nature of things universally is evident from various sources including the *Hiraṇyagarbha* hymn. The seventh mantra of the hymn explains the beginning of creation in terms of colossal span of water pervading universally and producing *Agni* organically from within it. This span of water can in other words be described as *Aditi*, the

universal creatrix.[2] This is suggested by the next mantra in the hymn where these waters are said to have borne in their womb *Dakşa*.[3] *Dakşa* is said in the *Ṛgveda* to be related to *Aditi* in a threefold manner. He is described as her father, husband and son all irreconcilably together.[4] Irreconcilability of the relationships between these two beings forming the beginning of creation bears out the supra-rational character of these beings. It refers to a state of being where the human mind, excepting that of the seer, has no access. Only this much can be inferred about it from the statement of the seer that it involves co-operation of two principles, one male and the other female, without, however, being able to determine priority of either of the two. Possibly they are two parts of one and the same transcendent Being dividing itself into two so as to create the world of contrarieties inclining towards eventual harmony. Out of this duality of the ultimate principle, that which is born first of all is described in the seventh mantra of the hymn as *Agni* while in the eight one as *Yajña*, sacrifice. Equation of sacrifice with *Agni* is suggestive of the same role of the former in the creative act as that of the latter.

Regarding *Agni*, what is evident is that it promotes the cause of creation through transformation. This then presumably should be true of sacrifice also. In sacrifice what happens is that the offerings of material things are put in fire with the supposition that they would reach the divine. The ground for the expectation of this extraordinary transformation is that this world along with all sorts of beings, including the physical, are supposed to have been born through a particular act of sacrifice made by the Supreme Being himself. This is the central idea put forth by the celebrated hymn to *Puruşa*. According to it, the Supreme Being is infinite in his capabilities as well as potentiality assuming diverse forms. He, however, is basically transcendent. When He desires to create the world and become immanent, He takes recourse to the device of sacrifice. Since there is nothing besides himself at this stage of being, He is obliged to play by himself all the roles required for the performance of any sacrifice. These roles are basically those of *Agni*, of the offering and of the priest. Out of his mouth He produces *Agni* and offers himself as the animal of sacrifice through the agency of gods and seers being born of his

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2 आपो ह यद् बृहतीर्विश्वमायन् गर्भं दधाना जनयन्तीरग्निम्।
ततो देवानां समवर्ततासुरेकः कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम।। *Ibid., X.121.7*

3 यश्चिदापो महिना पर्यपश्यद् दक्षं दधाना जनयन्तीर्यज्ञम्।
यो देवेष्वधि देव एक आसीत् कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम।। *Ibid.,X.121.8*

4 अदितेर्दक्षो अजायत दक्षाद्वदितिः परि। *Ibid.,X.72.4*

mind and the senses.[5] Since this creative sacrifice was performed by the transcendent Self playing diverse roles requisite for sacrifice by itself, it came to form the fundamental cause of everything evolved out of this act of sacrifice. The *Puruṣa* is characterised as sacrifice as well as the means of sacrifice. Thus not only actual creation but even the inclination to create makes the Being be characterised as a sacrifice. Out of this sacrifice emerge the basic principles of existence described as primeval laws controlling, sustaining and guiding the Becoming of the Being.[6]

Thus sacrifice is regarded by the Vedic seer as the most fundamental principle of creation forming the source of all other principles howsoever supposedly primeval. It is next to the transcendent Being himself or rather identical to him having become creative through his desire to offer himself to the fire produced out of himself for the actualisation of his desire.

The veracity of this vision of the Vedic seer can easily be seen attested on the physical plane through the findings of modern science. According to the latter nothing is concrete and stable in the universe. Everything is just a process of concrescence of diverse events getting prehended into one event and being transcended by forming a part of another event of concrescence and prehension, as the celebrated British philosopher *Whitehead* describes it and accordingly characterises the totality of the reality as a becoming rather than a being or a process rather than anything in process. On particularly the psychological plane the same truth was realised by Buddha as is evident from his analysis of the inner being of man or any living being as a sheer process of momentary experiences rather than as any permanent agent going through that process. It is indeed an abysmal irony of fate in the history of Indian thought that the institution of sacrifice which formed the corner-stone of Buddha's critique of the Vedic thought and culture, has behind itself the same idea of perpetual change as its basis as was adopted by him as the tool of this critique. When the *Yajurveda* characterises everything in the world as in a state of constant flux and lays down the imperative that therefore it is to be treated as the abode of God to dwell in and enjoy with a sense of detachment without coveting for anything therein as an enduring possession of one's own, it only anticipates Buddha's acute

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5 यत्पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत।
वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः।। *Ibid., X.90.6*

6 यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्।
ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः।। *Ibid.,X.90.16*

analysis of the nature of existence and *Whitehead's* apotheosis of the world along with his analysis of the latter as a sheer eventuation of events.[7] The only significant difference between Buddha and *Whitehead* on the one hand and the Veda on the other is that while the former trace the origin of the process in void, the latter visualises it as proceeding from the Self itself without whose admittance one cannot be sure of the veracity of his own being, much less that of his proposition of any sort whatever.

Leaving the question of the Ultimate apart, however, the Vedic seer's acceptance of *Agni* as the primary agent of transformation on the universal as well as the individual level has a unique kind of coincidence with the modern scientific viewpoint. His account of the Supreme's offering himself to the fire for the sake of the creation coincides very well with the scientists' view of the creation having started with the original ball of fire and being carried on by the impact of the explosion having taken place in all its singularity at the primeval stage. At the same time the basic difference between the two approaches, however, is that while the scientist delimits the scope of the explosion to the physical, the Vedic seer takes it back to the spiritual regarding the physical as the latest of the manifestations of the sacrifice having taken place on the level of the Supreme Being. This difference between the two viewpoints tells significantly upon the utilisation of the concept of the primeval sacrifice or explosion by the followers of the respective two approaches. While the scientist concentrates himself exclusively on the physical taking it as something ultimate, the follower of the Vedic tradition seeks to apply this view of the universe to all planes of his being including the spiritual, the mental and the vital besides the physical. In order to emulate the original event as well as to enact its impact on his life at the moment, he is enjoined to perform sacrifice thrice a day on smaller scale and from time to time on larger scale or indeed to render his whole life into a sacrifice and make it accord to the basic spirit operating behind the creation.

Besides this complex of ideas, much more has been communicated by the Vedic seer from time to time through a series of symbolic formulations and equations relating to sacrifice. In this way, sacrifice has been conceived as a journey, path, chariot and boat destined to reach the state of highest felicity, no matter be it conceived as the heaven or the state of being of the Supreme himself. Seer *Kaṇva* in one of his mantras, for instance, describes sacrifice as a path easily traversable and thornless

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7 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्।। *Yajurveda XL.1*

particularly for him who has *Ṛta* as his destination.[8] In the next mantra, the same seer conceives of it again as a vehicle to be driven along straight path by the *Ādityas* so that it may coincide with contemplation on them.[9] Symbolisation of the performance of sacrifice leading straightaway to the Divine through contemplation on him suggests the purpose of sacrifice as a device intended for elevation of the human to the level of the Divine. Contemplation on and attainment of the Divine being the real purpose behind the performance, all the acts involved in it are just symbolic.

The symbolism of sacrifice is extremely complex. The complexity of it is due to the plurality of the levels on which sacrifice has been conceived in the Veda. As is evident from the last mantra of the hymn to *Puruṣa* quoted at *footnote No.6* above, sacrifice denotes here itself as the object of offering as well as the process of offering besides the institution under which the offering is made. Thus it is conceived as the means as well as the end besides the process by passing through which the end is achieved through the application of the means. This is true particularly on the cosmogonic level on account of the seer's vision of the absolute unity of the ultimate state of things. Since, owing to its oneness the ultimate principle has to work in several capacities in the act of creation and that also without any ulterior motive imputable to it, it has conveniently been represented by the institution of sacrifice and the process of sacrificing as well as the stuff getting sacrificed.

Accordingly it is used sometimes as a symbol of something, and sometimes as the real content sought to be symbolised by something else. Sometimes it denotes the path, sometimes the path-maker and sometimes also the vehicle used in traversing the path, no matter be it on the dry land, in air or in water creating thus the scope for its representation by the chariot, the horse, or the boat. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by him, *Agastya* tells *Indra* that though proceeding in a zigzag manner by its wandering mind the sacrifice eventually promotes the cause of *Indra* like the fordable point of the river serving as the resort of the thirsty or like a long but result-oriented path.[10] The fordable spot of the river may lie relatively at a distance but it is here that one can cross the river as well as cool his body by taking his bath in it and drinking the

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8 सुगः पन्था अनृक्षर आदित्यास ऋतं यते। *RV.I.41.4*

9 यं यज्ञं नयथा नर आदित्या ऋजुना पथा।
प्र वः स धीतये नशत् ।। *Ibid.,I.41.5*

10 यज्ञो हि ष्मेन्द्र कश्चिद् ऋन्धञ्जुहुराणश्चिन्मनसा परियन्।
तीर्थे नाच्छा तातृषाणमोको दीर्घो न सिध्रमा कृणोत्यध्वा।। *Ibid., I.173.11*

water of it. Thus sacrifice happens to be represented here by the fordable spot of a river which might have been used as a symbol of the world or the worldly life as such. In the last part of the mantra, on the other hand, the same sacrifice has been considered as a path relatively longer but sure to yield fruit. The discovery of such a fordable spot or creation of the long but sure pathmust have required considerable effort on the part of the seer. This is indicated in the mantra by the words: *manasā pariyan*, wandering by the mind. This task or the achievement has been attributed to the sacrifice itself. Finding this term somewhat inconvenient to understanding, *Sāyaṇa* takes *yajña*, sacrifice, to stand for the performer of the sacrifice and he is not wrong in this act of conversion of sacrifice into the sacrificer, as is evident from the mantra of the hymn to *Puruşa* discussed above. But better than that is to take it in the sense of the primeval human sacrificer who by the application of his higher mental or psychic capability has discovered this circuitous but sure path called sacrifice. Search of a fordable spot in deep and mighty river is also not an easy task. It must have cost great effort and adventure on the part of its discoverer.

That the discovery of the device of sacrifice as the convenient way out of the drudgery of life and the world was not an easy task is evident from several mantras including one seen by *Gotama Rāhūgaṇa*. According to him, it is seer *Atharvan* who has discovered the path first of all by means of sacrifices as a result of which the lovely sun responsible for maintenance of order in the world came to emerge. It was along the path discovered by him that *Uśanā*, the embodiment of wisdom, drove the cows, as a consequence of which the path of immortality emerging out of the god of death, is being followed in the form of performance of sacrifice.[11] *Atharvan* is one of the primeval seers of the Veda. Creation of the path by him travelling alone while the lovely sun was seen emerging out of the darkness is a figurative way of saying that the path of sacrifice was discovered by seer *Atharvan* through the path of sacrifice and that the lovely sun representing the highest truth and beatitude was sighted ultimately by proceeding along that path. *Uśanā Kavyā* is another seer who completed the task undertaken by *Atharvan* by driving the cows of wisdom along that path. It is by virtue of making those cows move on this path of sacrifice that he came to visualise the path leading to immortality out of the world of mortality. On account of this momentous discovery, he came to be called *Kavyā*, wisdom, itself. His getting enlightened by driving

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11 यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि।
आ गा आजदुशना काव्यः सचा यमस्य जातममृतं यजामहे।। *Ibid.,I.83.5*

the cows along the particular path gets reflected subsequently in the Upaniṣadic story of *Satyakāma Jābāla* being asked by his teacher *Hāridrumata* to take cows, numbering four hundred, to the pasture-land and tend them intelligently so that they may grow into one thousand and *Satyakāma* doing accordingly and getting enlightened as a result of it. The knowledge *Satyakāma* acquired through this process has been termed there as the knowledge of the Absolute, *brahma-jñana* which is the only way to immortality out of the world of mortality. The lovely sun of the Rgvedic mantra discovered by *Atharvan* and preparing the way to its realisation by *Uśanā Kavyā* is symbolic of the same Absolute.

Needless to point out that the path of sacrifice meant here is not confined to sheer *karma-kānda* as explained so elaborately by *Sāyaṇa* and spoken of so derisively by *Āćārya Śaṅkara* earlier while drawing the exclusive line of demarcation between the *Upaniṣads* and the rest of the Vedic literature. This path of sacrifice is the path of integral knowledge which is inclusive of everything worth acquiring particularly in the spiritual field. Even *Sāyaṇa* has taken it in the sense of *tapas*, which, again, as explained earlier, is a term comprehensive enough to include in it all sorts of *sādhanā* beneficial in self-purification and elevation.

There is another mantra seen by *Grtsamada* in which sacrifice again has been regarded as the means of discovering the path by those possessed of superconsciousness and highly motivated by higher aspiration. It is said regarding them that they acquired wealth and cows by drawing the attention of *Indra* through recitation of mantras and patient waiting for his favour.[12] Here also the sacrifice used as a means in finding out the path is not an ordinary sacrifice involving offering of oblation to the fire. High motivation and superconsciousness of the seers discovering the path are indicative of their effort particularly on the spiritual plane. Their sitting patiently and reciting mantras are something like taking to the path of meditation and recitation of sacred words. Sitting motionless, as is suggested by the word *niṣāda*, and discovering the path are fraught with contradiction. As a matter of fact, discovery of any actual path has the pre-requisite of considerable movement. This is not possible through any sacrifice either, since the latter too has as its pre-requisite the necessity of

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12 यज्ञेन गातुमप्तुरो विविद्रिरे धियो हिन्वाना उशिजो मनीषिणः ।
अभिस्वरो निषदा गा अवस्यव इन्द्रे हिन्वाना द्रविणान्याशत । । *Ibid.,II.21.5*

sitting for quite some time around the fire-altar. The path discovered by such sitting would obviously not be any actual path. Much less would it be any such path if discovered through highly motivated meditation and recitation of sacred words. Thus, if sacrifice through which the path is said to have been discovered by the enlightened seers cannot be an actual sacrifice, the path discovered through such sacrifice can also not be any actual path. The actual sacrifice must have been used here just to symbolise the spiritual process through which the precious objects were actually obtained. That process itself, in its turn, must be the real thing intended to be suggested by the figure of path. Now when sacrifice turns out to be the spiritual process, and the latter the path in the vision of the seer, the former proves to be nothing but the path itself by the same logic as if $A = B$, and $B = C$, then it is as much justified to infer that $A = C$. Here, thus, the intensive process of self-purification and elevation has been symbolised by sacrifice on account of the latter's tangibility capable of giving shape to the former which, being purely psychological and spiritual, is extremely abstract. Moreover, since the process leads to a different state of being through its transformatory effect, the sacrifice, in is turn, has been symbolised by path so as to meet further the necessity of clear ideation and expression.

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This symbolism gets further clarified if we connect it with another mantra seen by *Brhaspati*. In this highly important mantra it is stated that people traversed the path leading to the discovery of *Vak* by means of sacrifice and found her eventually in the seers. Having brought her hitherward, the seer continues, they put her at diverse places and it is that *Vak* which is being uttered by means of seven notes, *rebhah*.[1] The seven notes have been understood as the seven varieties of metre such as *Gāyatri, Uṣṇik, Anuṣṭup, Bṛhatī, Pańkti, Trṣṭup* and *Jagatī* by *Sāyaṇa* and that also quite justifiably, since the path along which *Vāk* is supposed to have been discovered, as per the context, must refer to the Vedic word or mantra. Here the problem arises as to who were those persons who took up sacrifice as a means to reach the proximity of *Vāk* and found it as having entered into seers. Apparently they should be different from the seers and be only performers of sacrifice. But this supposition would be in clear contravention of those categorical Vedic statements according to which the mantra came automatically rushing to the seers while they were engaged in *tapas* and that these seers themselves were sacrificers as well. The seer of the mantra and the discoverer of the mantra in the seer cannot, therefore, be different from each other. It is, thus, obvious that the discoverer of the mantra in the seer and the seer himself must be one and the same person seeing the mantra and realising that he has turned into the seer by virtue of having seen the mantra. This apparent dichotomy between the act of seeing and the act of realising that one has become the seer is due to colossal difference of the level of consciousness of the seer from that of the common human being. It is only after passing through that colossal difference between the two levels that the person concerned comes to see the mantras and then deserves to be called a seer. While the common human consciousness is governed by the ego, the seer's consciousness lies beyond the ego. This is evident from autobiographical notes left by seers here and there in mantras including one seen by *Dirghatamas* in which he observes that he did not know what he was and moved in the world like a cart drawn by the mind as the

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1 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टाम्।
तामाभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरूत्रा तां सप्त रेभा अभिसंनवन्ते।। *RV.X.71.3*

horse and that it was after the first issues of *Ṛta* came to him that he could avail himself of a certain share of the *Vāk*.[2]

As such, in the case of the mantra under discussion we can conclude fairly well that those traversing the path leading to discovery of *Vāk* in seers were the same as the seers themselves in whom the word was found out as having made its entry. The sacrifice they used as the vehicle to cover the distance between the household of the discoverers and the locale of the seers cannot be taken as just offering of oblation to fire with the recitation of mantras, since the mantras to be used in the recitation were yet to be found in the seers. This sacrifice must, therefore, be the complex of psychic and spiritual effort put in by the aspirants of seerhood before attaining to seerhood. In view of the prolificity of imagination displayed in conceiving the metres as birds chirping the newly discovered *Vāk* all around, as *Sāyaṇa* ingeneously takes the last part of the mantra to mean, there is nothing surprising if the seer of the mantra represents the seers as a class of people entirely different from what they were before getting the enlightenment and conceives of the psychic and spiritual *sādhanā* of those people as a sacrifice leading to a certain destination lying so far away from the starting point as to have allowed the traversers of the path to have got completely transformed from common human beings into seerhood.

Incidentally it has also to be noted that in the midst of the two mantras discussed last, there is a marked difference in the nature of the objects found out at last by similar kind of people through one and the same means, that is sacrifice. To remind ourselves, while in the last mantra the object found is the word or mantra, in the earlier one it is cows and wealth. Now when the entire content of the mantras concerned turns out to be so highly psychological as to reach the stage of egolessness, there is no sense in allowing cows and gems to remain what apparently they are. They indeed are symbolic representation of the spiritual wealth embodied in the mantras.

There is a group of four mantras seen by *Vairūpa Sadhri* in which sacrifice has been symbolised by chariot. In the first one of these mantras, it is stated that seers by means of their higher intellect have created sacrifice and have run it as a chariot by means of mantras drawn from the *Ṛgveda* and the *Sāmaveda* and have used them as the horses of this chariot.

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2 न वि जानामि यदिवेदमस्मि निण्यः सन्नद्धो मनसा चरामि।
यदा मागन् प्रथमजा ऋतस्यादिद् वाचो अश्नुवे भागमस्याः।। *Ibid., I.164.37*

Forty vessels are said to form the load of this chariot. Metres twelve in number are supposed to serve as the ropes keeping all the parts of the chariot tied together.[3] This chariot is supposed to have loaded on it great glories fourteen in number. These glories are said to have been brought to the chariot by wise seers through their word. At this stage the seer makes the query regarding that comprehensive ford by driving along which people could make available to them *Soma* as a drink extracted from the creeper.[4] What these fourteen glories loaded on the chariot of sacrifice are is difficult to ascertain in the absence of any specific clue to it at this stage.

Leaving it here, therefore, when we proceed to the next mantra we have account of a type of mantras called *Uktha* giving their number as fifteen but maintaining about them that their placings are a thousand covering as much space as is there between the heaven and the earth. Their glories are further said to number a thousand with their placings numbering a thousand. Ultimately it is stated that the word, *Vāk*, is as extensive and diverse as *Brahman*, the Reality itself.[5] It is obvious from this account that in the figurative description of sacrifice the seer is trying to bring out the idea of co-ordination between the word and the reality. In any sacrificial performance, the sacrificial act is undertaken in keeping with the imperative given by the sacred word. Thus, there exists perfect co-ordination between the word and the action. Now when the whole of the world, as is suggested by the span of the heaven and the earth in which it exists, comes to be supposed as a sacrifice moving like a chariot and being in search of a fordable point for moving out of the drudgery of life so as to reach the point of drinking of *Soma*, what is there to serve as its verbal coordinate? The answer to this query seems to be embodied in the mantra quoted last.

To begin with the immediately preceding mantra quoted at *footnote No.4*, when the entire process of the world comes to be conceived as a sacrifice and the latter as a chariot moving in search of the ford, we can take the fourteen glories referred to in the mantra to stand for the fourteen

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3 षट्त्रिंशांश्चतुरः कल्पयन्तश्छन्दांसि च दधत आ द्वादशम्।
यज्ञं विमाय कवयो मनीष ऋक्सामाभ्यां प्र रथं वर्तयन्ति। Ibid.,X.114.6

4 चतुर्दशान्ये महिमानो अस्य तं धीरा वाचा प्रणयन्ति सप्त ।
आप्नानं तीर्थ क इह प्रवोचद्येन पथा प्रपिबन्ते सुतस्य। । Ibid., X.114.7

5 सहस्रधा पञ्चदशान्युक्था यावद् द्यावापृथिवी तावदित् तत्।
सहस्रधा महिमानः सहस्रं यावद् ब्रह्म विष्ठितं तावती वाक् । । *Ibid.,X.114.8*

planes of being known as *lokas* subsequently. Since all of them are being mobilised by one and the same central agency of movement conceived as a chariot representing the universal sacrifice, they are regarded as just an extension of the chariot or rather load placed on it. The seven seers said to carry the load on the chariot of sacrifice by means of word may be conceived as the seven openings in the human head serving as agencies of representation of the world to the individual in a nutshell. The basis of this supposition is a mantra occurring in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* as also with slight variation in the *Atharvaveda* and quoted in an earlier lecture in this series. It talks of a bowl with a hole on its front side and placed upside down so that its bottom lies upward. This bowl is said to have contained in it glory in its entirety and in all possible forms. Then further it is likened to a sacred tank of water with seven seers sitting at its bank and *Vāk* doing parlance with Brahman, the reality.[6] In fact, the nature of the world is such that it must have had a common root as also must be destined to move towards a common goal. This is evident from the uniformity of the fundamental laws of nature working behind it. It also may be taken to be evidenced by the individual's relationship with it. The individual arises out of the smallest possible fraction of it and yet has the possibility of growing into a being capable of understanding it in its entirety through the application of his mind covering again in its core the smallest possible span of space. Within that much space, forming the core of the brain, there must, thus, lie the potentiality of compressing the totality of the reality not only in sheer conceptual form but in all possible actuality, as is evident from the visions of seers transcending concepts and approximating the Reality itself.

It is in view of this enormous possibility having been actualised by him that the seer talks of the human head as having contained in it the entire glory of the world in all possible forms. Herein lie compressed all the fourteen *lokas* existing in the midst of the heaven and the earth and herein are busy the seven seers preparing the replica of the totality of the reality in the form of sensations, percepts, concepts and visions as also are working out simultaneously verbal representations of those sensations, percepts, concepts and visions. This whole process going on within the individual involving submission of sensations to percepts, of percepts to concepts and of concepts to visions and getting the lower one transformed into the higher one is a sacrifice, as it were, as essential as the one being undertaken by Nature on the universal scale outside the

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6 अर्वाग्विलश्चमस ऊर्ध्वबुध्नस्तस्मिन् यशो निहितं विश्वरूपम्।
तस्यासत ऋषयः सप्त तीरे वागष्टमी ब्रह्मणा संविदाना।। *Brh.Up.II.2.3*

individual.

It is interesting to note here that *Sāyaṇa* in his commentary on fifteen *ukthas* mentioned in the mantra under consideration understands them as certain basic components of the human personality numbering fifteen and comprising eye, ear, *manas*, speech and *prāṇa*, their respective sensibilities and the latter's respective five sources in nature as transmitted to him by his parents. Thus he explains the word *uktha* in the sense of these organs of the body of higher order. Similarly he takes the word *sahasradhā* in this context in the sense of infinite ways of action and reaction of these organs with the world outside. Though a little obscure, this explanation goes in confirmation of the viewpoint taken up by us here and indicates to its rootedness in the Indian tradition throughout.

Further confirmation to the viewpoint presented above, comes from the next mantra in the order. Here a number of queries are made in a row. The first one of the queries is as to who, the wise, knows the role of the metres in this venture. The second one of them relates to the wise one who has acquired the word befitting the seat of the priests performing the sacrifice. The third one concerns the particular priest who occupies the eighth place among the priests. The last one relates to the wise priest who knows really what *Indra's* two horses are.[7] All these queries relate to the phenomenon of sacrifice. As such, answers to them could have been understood so easily as not to have necessitated the seer to have raised them at all. Raising of the queries on his part, thus, suggests to some sort of mysticism involved in them. It indicates to the fact that the things inquired about are not used here in their ordinary meanings. Thus *chandas* cannot mean here mere metre nor can *dhiṣṇyā* mean just the seat of the priest. So must be the case with the eighth priest and the two horses of *Indra*. As regards the two horses of Indra, it has already been seen in the sixth mantra of the hymn quoted at *footnote No.3* that they symbolise the mantras of the *Ṛgveda* and the *Sāmaveda*. The symbolic sense of *chandas* has also been determined already as amounting to the principles keeping tied together diverse parts, sections and functions of the universe conceived as the chariot of sacrifice. Now remain undecided the symbolic meanings of the eighth priest and of his seat near the sacrificial pit. This can be done with the help of the mantra quoted from

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7 कश्छन्दसां योगमावेद धीरः को धिष्ण्यां प्रति वाचं पपाद।
कमृत्विजामष्टमं शूरमाहु र्हरी इन्द्रस्य निचिकाय कः स्वित्।। *RV.X.114.9*

the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* at *footnote No.6*. In this mantra, while the rest of the seven seers sitting around the human head conceived as a peculiar tank of water are really symbolic representation of the seven sensory holes in the human head, the eighth one has been identified as the *Vāk* engaged in parlance with Brahman, the reality. It is this *Vāk*, therefore, which must stand for the eighth priest inquired about by the seer in the mantra under discussion. Having admitted this much, we can easily ascertain the seat of the eighth priest near the sacrificial pit to represent the organ of speech.

Thus we see how the individual has been symbolised by sacrifice as well as by chariot. Symbolisation of the individual's personality as a sacrifice must have been motivated by the vision of the pattern of its working in the wider perspective of life. Ordinarily an individual treats himself as an organism meant for appropriating things of the external world for self-aggrandisement. But this is an extremely narrow outlook towards one's personality along with the direction of its working. Howsoever self-appropriative one may be, one has to meet one's death eventually resulting in disintegration of himself as well of his acquisitions. The Vedic seer's deep consciousness of this fact is evident from the word *martya*, mortal, he uses most frequently for the human being. It seems to be a stern reminder of the Vedic seer conveyed to man to awaken him from his instinctive slumber of self-complacency. As a way out of this drudgery of the human life under the oppression of which he is suffering so much, the seer suggests to him to treat himself as a model of sacrifice and regard himself as an agency meant more for giving than for receiving. Moreover, this giving has not to be just sharing but has got to be transformatory. Under it, one is required to abdicate what belongs to him so as to get it transformed. This lesson has been learnt by the seer from the Nature herself working on both the levels, the individual and the universal. On the individual level, we receive stimuli from the outside world and see them being transformed into sensations, percepts and concepts so as to be offered to the world completely transformed and to be transformatory in effect. So is the case with the food we receive. If it is not meant for getting transformed into physical, mental and spiritual power, taking of it is Satanic which is decried by the seer. On the universal scale also, things are happening likewise. That there is a definite process of transformation going on behind changing scenario of the world is evident from the evolutionary nature of things here on this earth itself. It is on account of that process of transformation going on in Nature that the ball of fire which the earth at one time was, has come to evolve on her surface such a

developed species as the mankind. The Vedic seer terms this process of offering and transformation into higher order of entities summarily as *yajña*, sacrifice.

The idea of sacrifice as the model of this process of transformation has come from the transformatory role *Agni* plays in the consumption of the oblation put into it. Apparently *Agni* consumes whatever is put into it to the latter's total loss. But that is not the case. As a matter of fact, the fire does not keep anything of the object consumed within it. It only transforms the object concerned into subtler forms. It takes gross things from the sacrificer and transmits the same to the Divine in a subtle form.

Since there is a definite process involved in the act of transformation as symbolised by sacrifice, it has been conceived symbolically as a chariot with *Agni* drawing it in the capacity of the horse. This idea is embedded in several mantras. For instance, in one of the mantras seen by *Vasistha*, sacrifice has been compared to a fast-moving chariot drawn by a horse.[8] In another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*, *Agni* has been characterised as the centre of sacrifices, seat of riches, great call as well as charioteer and ensign of the chariot of sacrifice.[9] In view of symbolising the principle of universal dynamics called *Ṛta*, sacrifice has been conceived by *Vāmadeva* in one of the mantras seen by him as a lustrous, efficient and straightforward chariot with *Agni* as its charioteer.[10]

Sacrifice has also been symbolised by boat. In a mantra seen by *Budha*, mankind has been advised to recite the mantras sonorously and universally, prepare the oblations and implements and thus make ready the boat of sacrifice sailable by means of oars and let it move forward with friendliness with one another.[11] In another mantra seen by *Kautsa*, *Indra* is said to rejoice with human beings in the boat of sacrifice having its own brilliance when, of course, the threefold fire burns on the poles of it.[12]

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8 प्र यज्ञ एतु हेत्वो न सप्तिः। *Ibid., VII.43.2*

9 नाभिं यज्ञानां सदनं रयीणां महामाहावमभि सं नवन्त।
वैश्वानरं रथ्यमध्वराणां यज्ञस्य केतुं जनयन्त देवाः।। *Ibid., VI.7.2*

10 अधा ह्यग्ने क्रतोर्भद्रस्य दक्षस्य साधोः।
रथीर्ऋतस्य बृहतो बभूथ। *Ibid., IV.10.2*

11 मन्द्रा कृणुध्वं धिय आ तनुध्वं नावमरित्रपरणीं कृणुध्वम्।
इष्कृणुध्वमायुधारं कृणुध्वं प्राञ्चं यज्ञं प्र णयता सरवायः।। *Ibid.,X.101.2*

12 ऊर्ध्वा यत् ते त्रेतिनी भूद्यज्ञस्य धूर्षु सदमन्।
सजूर्नावं स्वयशसं सचायोः।। *Ibid.,X.105.9*

But, what is the destination of the boat symbolising sacrifice? The nature of the destination is implied in the presence of *Indra* in the boat side by side the humans. The point, however, is made clear by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* through its statement that all sacrifices are a boat destined to reach the heaven.[13] The basic idea behind this symbolism, however, is presented by a mantra seen by *Gaya Plāta*. He envisages the whole of the creation comprising the heaven and the earth and the beings living in between them as a boat free of seepage and furnished with defectless oars and moving under the guidance of *Aditi*, the supreme creatrix of the world. As component parts of this boat while the earth has been described as highly protective, the heaven has been regarded as taintless. Thus the entire creation is visualised as moving uniformly towards the divine destination under the ingeneous guidance of *Aditi*. As she is the mother of gods, all of them, including *Indra*, as maintained in the mantra quoted at *footnote No.10*, may be taken to be sailing in the boat along with the living beings. Sacrifice being a replica of the universe particularly in so well defined a form as envisaged in this mantra, legitimately enough, it too has been conceived as a boat so as to symbolise the universe in its entire process.

The symbol of boat representing sacrifice as well as the universe in its progressive movement has a feature distinct from the chariot used in the same sense. While the chariot emphasises the dynamics of the universal existence and its replica in the form of the sacrifice, the boat suggests to the smoothness of the operation of the dynamics. This smoothness is evident in things changing in the world as well as in life mostly without any jerk whatsoever so that it has been rather difficult for mankind to feel any all-inclusive change taking place at all in the scenario of the universe, and not to talk of its uniform progression towards a certain destination. It is only the modern scientists who with rigorous application of their acute intelligence assisted by matching apparatus could conceive of any such progressive change taking place uniformly in the whole of the universe. They, however, have not been able to determine the direction of the universal dynamics so far. Vedic seers, on the other hand, did not only envision the universal dynamics operative behind the apparent stasis of the universe in much advance of the modern scientists, but could also determine clearly the direction and destination of the dynamics. How far the model of sacrifice in this respect was helpful to them, may be a matter

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13 सुत्रामाणं पृथिवीं द्यामनेहसं सुशर्माणमदितिं सुप्रणीतिम्।
दैवीं नावं स्वरित्रामनागसमस्रवन्तीमा रूहेमा स्वस्तये।। *RV.X.63.10*

of debate, but this much is certain that this model stands as a definite proof of their vision of the dynamics as well as of the destination.

While concluding the boat-symbolism of sacrifice, it would be unfair not to take note of it as occurring in the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*. Here too sacrifices have been conceived as boats but unlike that envisaged by *Gaya Plāta* as discussed above. While the boat of *Gaya Plāta* is a single uniform and all-embracing one, that referred to by the *Upaniṣad* is plural in number and therefore far from being all-inclusive. Moreover, while the former is absolutely free of any possibility of seepage, the latter are unsound and likely to break in any eventuality. In the third place, the boat of *Gaya Plāta* is said to move towards the divine destination under the guidance of *Aditi*, the mother of all gods, while the boats mentioned in the *Upaniṣad* are laden each with desires and actions of a lower grade.[14] All these features of the boats mentioned in the *Upaniṣad* are clear indication of the difference between the two varieties of the boats. While the boat of *Gaya Plāta* represents the universal Nature sailing under the direction of *Aditi* towards its common divine destination, the boats referred to in the *Upaniṣad* are small ferries meant for taking people to and fro in keeping with their wishes. They represent sacrifices no doubt but only of such sorts as are meant for fulfilment of petty personal desires such as acquisition of wealth, enjoyment of the felicity of heaven etc. Through these sacrifices one may have his particular desire fulfilled but can by no means attain to the state of final blessedness involving transformation of the lower nature. This is why the Upaniṣadic sage denounces such sacrifices. In denouncing them he is not to be taken as critical of the higher sacrifice such as one envisaged by *Gaya Plāta*. The latter, indeed coincides with the highest Upaniṣadic *sādhanā* itself. Not to talk of the *Upaniṣad*, had even Buddha been aware of the boat-symbolism of sacrifice as envisioned by *Gaya Plāta*, he is most likely not to have denounced the institution of sacrifice at all, since it, in this particular form, seems to be prototypal of the fundamental idea on which the *Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism itself has been based. If everyone is a potential Buddha proceeding onward to actualise that ideal state of things along the path of birth and death, the boat of *Gaya Plāta* also gives the same promise universally for all without any exclusion or discrimination, since the boat is all-inclusive. Nowhere do we find the Great Vehicle of the

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14 प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म।
एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापियन्ति।। *Mun.Up.I.2.7*

Mahāyāna Buddhism anticipated so well as in the sacrificial boat of *Gaya Plāta*, notwithstanding Buddha's bitter criticism of the institution of sacrifice. So may be said about the *Upaniṣad's* denunciation of the sacrificial boats. It denounces them because they are meant for the fulfilment of petty desires and by means the highest aspiration lying in attaining to the Divine.

The sacrificial symbolism has been used extensively to explain the origin of the world also. Starting a series of question-answers, called *Brahmodya*, relating to the fundamentals of the Reality, seer *Dirghatamas* happens to ask at one place a set of four questions. The first one of these questions relates to the final end of the earth. Obviously, for the seer, the earth was sheer extension. That is why it is called *pṛthivī*. To trace the end of the earth was, therefore, a great problem not only with the seer but with inquisitive people until much later also, indeed until the advent of the modern age at the beginning of which, adventurous people set out to find the solution of this innate question ending ultimately in the discovery that the earth is really round and hence endless rather than flat with the possibility of its end somewhere. The seer's answer to this question, interestingly enough, is that the sacrificial pit itself is the end of the earth. The significance of this answer is quite obvious. It may have a twofold connotation. Firstly, it may be indicative of the seer's perception of the otherwise indeterminateness of the end of the earth. That is why against the expectation of pointing to some distant place as the end of the earth, he points to the fire-pit of the sacrifice as that end. Secondly, earth may here be symbolic of matter extending up to the whole of the physical world. By putting this question thus, the seer may be supposed equally well to have been inquisitive about the state of things where the physical ends giving place to something else. That way also the answer offered by the seer looks to be highly significant, because whatever is put in the sacrificial pit is supposed to get rid of its physicality and, with the acceptance of it by the divinity concerned, become a part of the Divine.

The second question put forward by the seer relates to the centre of the creation. It is to be noted that while the first question was concerned with the periphery of the earth or the physical world, as the case might have been as per the validity of the two alternative explanations of his first question, the second one is concerned with the centre of it. Here the use of the word *bhuvana* the centre of which he inquires about, bears out the validity of the second one of the above two alternative connotations of the word *pṛthivī*. It appears, what he means by the word *pṛthivī* is the same as is denoted by the word *bhuvana*, that is the creation. However, as answer to this question what he points out is that this sacrifice itself is the centre

of the creation.[1] Just as the word *anta*, end, used in connection with the first question has a temporal as well as a spatial connotation, even so the word *nābhi*, centre, has the probability of both these connotations being compressed in it. As such, creation may be taken as a wheel whose centre and periphery are being inquired about by the seer. Or, alternatively, it may be regarded as a process extending in time and the seer may be supposed to be inquisitive about its beginning and the end. However, since space and time determine the existence of anything by getting intertwined with each other inseparably, both forming different dimensions of the thing in question, both the models of the creation mooted out here may be treated as two sides of the same coin. In any case, however, both the answers offered by the seer relate intimately to the phenomenon of sacrifice. Thus, according to the seer, while the fire-pit used in the sacrifice is the periphery or end of the creation, sacrifice is its centre or the point of beginning.

The famous hymn to *Puruṣa* seems to be an elaboration of this cryptic statement of *Dīrghatamas'*. Here creation has been explained in terms of sacrifice. It conceives of the Being existing before the creation as thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, and thousand-footed and as enclosing the whole of the creation and yet outstanding it by a measure of ten fingers.[2] As one's head actually measures one's ten fingers and stands at the top, the *Puruṣa*, since obviously conceived after the human being, may be supposed to have been envisioned by the seer as enclosing the whole of the creation by the rest of his body and as outstanding it by his head. The nature of his enclosing the world is defined further as not lying in someone enclosing something else but in the *Puruṣa* himself forming the real content of the world in all respects in its past, present and future. Besides this immanence, his transcendence is indicated in terms of his ruling over immortality by virtue of transcending the world of causality.[3] The world is further described as just an extension of him, a casual extension of one of his four feet with his other three feet kept firmly and eternally constant in the heaven.[4] It is out of this foot that the world is

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1 पृच्छामि त्वा परमन्तं पृथिव्याः पृच्छामि यत्र भुवनस्य नाभिः। *RV.I.164.34*
इयं वेदिः परो अन्तः पृथिव्या अयं यज्ञो भुवनस्य नाभिः। *Ibid.,I.164.35*

2 सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात्।
स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वाऽत्यतिष्ठद्दशाङ्गुलम्।। *Ibid., X.90.1*

3 पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद् भूतं यच्च भव्यम्।
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यदन्नेनातिरोहति।। *Ibid.,X.90.2*

4 एतावानस्य महिमाऽतो ज्यायाँश्च पूरुषः।
पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि।। *Ibid.,X.90.3*

further said to have emerged in its multitudinous diversity.[5] From him is said to have emerged *Virāṭ* which however, even after emergence, works within the control of the *Puruşa* himself.[6]

It is on the point of the emergence of *Virāṭ* that the seer introduces the symbol of sacrifice to explain the creation of the world from all-comprehending transcendent Being conceived as a *Puruşa*, person.

The difference between the *Puruşa* and *Virāṭ* is that while the former is transcendent and immanent both, the latter is only immanent. Since the immanence of the *Puruşa* is causal by virtue of his being the cause of *Virāṭ*, as against the latter's immanence being effectual, there must be some significant difference between the immanence of the *Puruşa* and *Virāṭ*. While the immanence of the *Puruşa* may be supposed to be somewhat ideological, that of *Virāṭ* will have to be taken as actual. *Virāṭ* may thus be taken as the effect of the *Puruşa* in the sense of representing the immanence of him actualised. It is there to serve as the intermediary between the *Puruşa* and the world of actuality. This difference in the respective functions of them is implied in the etymological meaning of these words. Accordingly, while the *Puruşa* lies asleep in his transcendence, *Virāṭ* shines in the act of manifesting the *Puruşa* in the diversity of the world. She is the agency of manifestation while the *Puruşa* is what gets manifested in the form of diversity.

Sacrifice has been envisaged here to symbolise the act of manifestation. This symbol has something special to communicate in this respect. Normally the creatorship of the world by some or the other form of the Supreme Being has generally been suggested in terms of manufacturing or procreation. The limitation of the former is that, under it, otherness of the material as well as the product from the manufacturer becomes an inevitable necessity. Wherever God is supposed to manufacture the world, He is taken to have derived his material from some or the other source entirely different from himself. Kindred is also the case with what He manufactures. He is supposed to lie apart from what He manufactures like the potter lying away from the pot he makes. This cleavage between the Creator, the creation and the material of creation has led to

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5 त्रिपादूर्ध्व उदैत पुरुषः पादोऽस्येहाभवत् पुनः।
ततो विष्वङ् व्यक्रामत् साशनानशने अभि ।। *Ibid.,X.90.4*

6 तस्माद्विराडजायत विराजो अधि पूरुषः।
स जातो अत्यरिच्यत पश्चाद् भूमिमथो पुरः। *Ibid.,X.90.5*

unnecessary presupposition of something else besides the Creator, the rationale of which has always been unconvincing. The cleavage between the Creator and the creation, on the other hand, has come to put a certain limit to the relationship of the creature with Him. The creature feels innately inclined to come as close to the Creator as possible but in this model there is no scope for doing anything more than craving for His favour which psychologically is depressing like the rule of the dictator.

The model of procreation, on the other hand, has its own limitation. It, no doubt, makes up considerably for depressive psychosis generated by the creator-creation model through the replacement of it by filial relations where there is much scope for feeling the sense of cordiality and warmth in the relationship, just as the child feels in the presence of its parents. The relationship between the two related terms gets also strengthened by the necessary feeling of participation into the being of each other. But, under this model what remains unexplained is the enormous diversity of forms of objects in the world supposed to have been procreated by the common agency. The organic being procreated is expected necessarily to accord well in its form and spirit both with its procreator. But, as against this expectation, much of what is supposed to have been procreated by an organic agency is not organic even. Moreover, even in the midst of organic beings there is such enormous diversity that any common parentage or fatherhood of them all seems to defy all norms of propriety.

The model of sacrifice as envisaged in the hymn to *Puruşa* is very much free of all these limitations insofar as emergence of the world from the Supreme Being has been sought to be explained through it. To begin with, two words used in the hymn are highly significant in this regard. They are *atyatişţhat* and *atyaricyata.* While the former means `remained in transcendence', the latter means `released what was in excess'. Both the words describing the mode of being of one and the same Person make out about him that He manifests himself in the emergence of the world and yet remains all the same eternally in transcendence which being three-fourth of him is overwhelmingly greater than what involves itself in the emergence. By virtue of the use of these two words of mutually contrasting sense, the seer anticipates the same antithetical position which subsequently came to be formulated in the *Upanişad* as the well known fantastically profound equation explaining the emergence of the world from the Absolute in words as under:

"The Absolute signified by the word Ōm is a whole, as also is a whole whatever has emerged from that whole. Even after deducing the whole from

the whole, however, what remains is exactly the same whole."[7]

This position is mathematically possible only if the original whole is infinite. Out of that infinite whole finite wholes may be deduced in any number and yet the former would remain all the same infinite.Another characteristic feature of any whole is that in any case it exceeds its parts. Cognisance of this point is very well implicit in conceiving of the *Puruşa* as thousand-headed, thousand-eyed and thousand-footed and yet as exceeding all this by a certain measure, no matter even by that of ten fingers.

Now, it is by virtue of his infinite wholeness that He has the capacity of manifesting himself in the form of infinite number of wholes and yet remain all the same in transcendence of all what has got manifested from him. It is his desire to turn this capacity into actuality which is the cause of his manifesting himself in the form of the world. If *atyatişţhat a* indicates to his eternal transcendence in spite of making himself involved in the manifestation, *atyaricyata* refers to the same manifestation out of his infinite wholeness. Thus the tendency of the whole to outstand its parts is the rationale of its transcendence on the one hand and its manifestation in the form of the world on the other. In one case, He remains eternally the same, while in the other he continues to overflow in the form of the world.

It is this innate nature of the eternal whole to overflow itself in the form of other wholes, which is suggested by the term *atyaricyata* in the hymn and has been symbolised through sacrifice. Had there been any other being, stuff or principle besides him to draw upon, the emergence of the world out of him would have been described in terms of manufacturing or procreation. But since He himself alone was there without a second whatever, He was to form the sufficient cause of the world by himself in its individuality as well as universality. These modes of manifestation have been symbolised in the hymn by *purah* and *bhūmim* respectively. The word *bhūmi* is derived from the root *bhū*, taken in the sense of the entire process of becoming which the world as a whole is. The word *purah*, on the other hand, is the plural form of *pūh*, which obviously is derived from the root *pṛ*, to fill. *Purah*, therefore, may be taken to stand for the individualities filling up and forming the content of the universal canvas of the process of becoming.

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7 ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते।। *Brh.Up.V.2.1*

Sacrifice is the symbol of giving while the best form of giving is the self-giving. Giving of children, wealth and other belongings stands only next to it in the order of merit from the moral viewpoint also. Thus the self-giving of the *Puruşa* to be sacrificed for the emergence of the world sets the highest ideal of sacrifice and has therefore been sought to be emulated by the followers of the Vedic tradition. *Dadhyañ's* self-sacrifice for the dissemination of the secret knowledge of immortality is a typical example of it. Such sacrifices could be made by spiritually enlightened persons in this tradition on account of their vision of the self-sacrifice of the Supreme Being in the emergence of the world.

The world being the self-effulgence of the *Puruşa* out of his perfection, essentially speaking there was no necessity of anyone or anything else to turn the possibility into the actuality. But once the act of self-giving or self-effulgence is undertaken to be given the form of sacrifice, giving to it the full form of sacrifice by adducing the entire paraphernalia of sacrifice becomes a desideratum. This is what has been done in the mantras sixth onwards.

The things requisite for sacrifice are oblation, *ghṛta*, fuel, fire, priest and *devatā*. These things are exclusive of one another and are, therefore, to be gathered from different sources. But when nothing else was there besides the *Puruşa* and even then the sacrifice had to be performed, the *Puruşa* himself has been supposed to have formed the common source of all these things. When *Agni* himself is supposed to have played the role of *purohita, ṛtvij* and *devatā* as well as of fire, as is borne out by the very first mantra of the *Ṛgveda*, it is much more profoundly possible for the Supreme Being to have played all these requisite roles by himself in the primeval sacrifice. Accordingly, in the sixth mantra of the hymn, it has been observed that while the *Puruşa* himself served as the source of oblation, spring season served as *ghṛta*, the summer as fuel and the autumn as sacred offering.[8] As a matter of fact, the spring, summer and autumn are such seasons in which *ghṛta*, fuel, and cereals used in the sacrificial offering are produced respectively in the largest quantity. On the basis of this solid fact these seasons themselves have been supposed to have served the purpose of these articles in the primeval sacrifice when the latter were still to be produced. This primeval sacrifice having been causal, the articles used in it also had necessarily to be so.

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8 यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत।
वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः।। *RV.X.90.6*

The seventh mantra mentions *devāh* and *ṛṣayaḥ* as the agencies who played their respective roles in the performance. Precisely it has been observed in the mantra that these agencies sprinkled water on the *Puruṣa* seating him on the sacred grass and offered him to the sacrificial fire by taking him as the animal of sacrifice.[9] As has been observed above, these gods and seers cannot but be aspects of the *Puruṣa* himself as were *ghṛta*, fuel and the sacred oblation. Since the priest and the *devatā* are pre-requisites of any sacrificial performance, the related aspects of the *Puruṣa* had to be conceived as such symbolically.

The eighth mantra talks of *ghṛta* that was produced out of the sacrifice as also of animals of all possible varieties living in air, in the forest as well as in villages.[10] Significant thing pointed out in this mantra is that animals are said to have been born out of the *ghṛta* produced from the sacrifice. This is complete reversal of what happens in actuality. In actuality, *ghṛta* is a product of the milk milked from animals. Thus the animal is the cause while *ghṛta* is a product of it. The same *ghṛta* then is used in the sacrifice. Here in the mantra, *ghṛta* is said to be a product of the sacrifice while animals are said to have been produced out of the *ghṛta*. This reversal of the natural order is owing to the sacrifice representing the primeval state of things when the laws of nature themselves were in the making. If *ghṛta* is produced out of the animal's milk, the animal concerned is sure to have a certain stuff kindred to *ghṛta* involved in its making. It is that primeval stuff, out of which the animal is formed, which *ghṛta* is used here to symbolise.

Exactly the same is true of the content of the next mantra though referring to an entirely different order of things. It refers to the mantric component of the sacrificial performance. If *devatā* is the addressee in any sacrificial performance, mantra is the means or vehicle of that address. Sacrifice is no sacrifice at all if performed without recitation of appropriate mantras. Thus, mantra is one of the indispensable means of the performance of a sacrifice. But here in the 9th mantra of the hymn, on this point also, things are described as happening in the reversed order. According to it, it was out of this all-inclusive sacrifice itself that the Vedic mantras of all varieties, such as *Ṛks, Sāmans, Yajusas* and *Chandasas*

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9 तं यज्ञं बर्हिषि प्रौक्षन् पुरुषं जातमग्रतः।
तेन देवा अयजन्त साध्या ऋषयश्च ये।। *Ibid.,X.90.7*

10 तस्माद्यज्ञात् सर्वहुतः संभृतं पृषदाज्यम्।
पशून् ताँश्चक्रे वायव्यानारण्यान् ग्राम्याश्च ये।। *Ibid.,X.90.8*

were produced.[11] This is not to suggest that all this happened on a certain point in the cosmic or rather pre-cosmic history. Things are given the historical perspective to symbolise the eternal and constant feature of the creation. The sacrifice where time itself, as suggested in the sixth mantra, serves as the fuel to consume the oblation, must refer to the constant nature of things revealing itself through the passage of time. If Vedic mantras are said to have been produced out of the all-inclusive sacrifice, it simply means that the sacrifice of the Supreme's offering of himself is going on constantly and that the production of the Vedic mantras out of that sacrifice is taking place constantly in the form of the visions of the seers. In other words, Vedic mantras are the verbal expression of the act of involvement of the Supreme leading to the emergence of the world. This is borne out by what the mantras amount to make out cumulatively. They are the songs of the Divine singing out the process of his manifestation in the form of the world in its different phases. The real source of the mantras is the Supreme's act of his manifestation itself, the seers of them being the human agents catching the cadence of that act in their own linguistic form.

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11 तस्माद्यज्ञात् सर्वहुत ऋचः सामानि जज्ञिरे।
छन्दांसि जज्ञिरे तस्माद्यजुस्तस्मादजायत।। *Ibid., X.90.9*

IV

The mantras eleventh to fourteenth talk symbolically of how the gross world came into being from different parts of his body. In view of the variety and disparateness of things from one another, here it has been presumed that they must have their source in different part of his body. In the eleventh mantra, the question has been raised as to how many parts the primeval *Puruşa* was divided into so as to make the world of diversity emerge out of it. Illustrating the point, it has been asked in the second part of the mantra as to what form his mouth took in the world, what his two arms and what his thighs and feet.[1]

These queries have been made particularly from the sociological point of view. Though the seer is dealing with the problem of emergence of the cosmos from the Supreme Being, the seer begins with the human society itself in this regard, as he himself is pre-eminently a part of this society. If conceiving of the Ultimate Reality reflects the psychic origin of the seer's vision, the primacy he has given to various sections of the society by way of associating them with different parts of the body of the *Puruşa*, bears out the depth of his social consciousness. Thus he is as much psychological and social in his approach, as he is cosmological. Accordingly, in the next mantra, he observes how it was the mouth of the *Puruşa* which assumed the form of the *Brahmin*, the arms which were turned into the *Rājanya*, the thighs which took the form of the *Vaiśya* and the feet which gave rise to the *Śūdra*.[2] It is significant to note that while in the first mantra of the hymn the *Puruşa* has been conceived as thousand-headed, thousand-eyed and thousand-footed, in the twelfth mantra the infinitude of his personality is cut down into the finitude of one-headedness, two-handedness and two-footedness in keeping with the form a normal human being has got. Such variability is possible only in symbolic thinking which is concerned primarily with the best possible expression of an idea otherwise irreducible to any logical formulation. As a matter of fact, the supreme source of the world cannot be conceived as a

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1 यत् पुरुषं व्यदधुः कतिधा व्यकल्पयन्।
मुखं किमस्य कौ बाहू का ऊरू पादा उच्येते ।। *RV.X.90.11*

2 ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः।
ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत।। *Ibid., X.90.12*

person at all. If, however, it is conceived as a person, that attribution of personality to it cannot but be symbolic, bearing out symbolically its integrality, unity, consciousness, intelligence, wisdom and purposefulness which are necessary constituent elements in the composition of the world needing, therefore, their presupposition in the original source. To conceive of that original source as possessing a tangible body, like a human, for instance, is all the more symbolic. As such, that body as a whole and in its parts and limbs would definitely be symbolising diverse functions and traits of its being as embodied in its manifestations.

The *Brahmin* is taken here to represent the mouth of the *Puruşa* by virtue of working as the spokesman of *Brahman*, the *Puruşa*. So is the case with the rest of the classes of people. The *Rājanya* is taken to represent the arms of the *Puruşa* on account of playing the role of the defence personnel. The major burden of the body is borne by the thighs. In the society, this role is played by the *Vaiśya*, who is inclusive not only of the businessman, as is ordinarily misunderstood, but also of producers of the foodstuff. That is why he is said here to represent the thighs of the *Puruşa* in the world. It is with the help of the legs that the thighs are able to bear the burden of the body not only in keeping it erect but also in discharging all possible functions including those of defence and acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. The section of the society which at the time of the seer was serving in this capacity was called *Śūdra*. That is why that section is supposed to represent the legs of the *Puruşa*.

This classification of the society is not to be taken as epoch-specific, as it is generally misunderstood. Since the seer's canvas of thinking in this hymn is cosmic, his ideas can by no means be confined to any specific period of human history and that also as applicable to a specific group of people of that age. On the contrary, it is sure to have some sort of universality about it. As such, the denominations *Brāhmaṇa, Rājanya, Vaiśya* and *Śūdra* used here are to be taken as symbolic of the intellectual-spiritual, defender-ruler, producer-supplier and the helper-technician. Needless to point out that these categories are universal and are traceable under one denomination or the other in any society, extant or rendered historical. Any organised society worth name always stands in the inevitable necessity of a certain section managing the economic matter, the other matters of defence and politics, the third one helping the two in carrying out their respective responsibilities, besides the fourth one looking after matters intellectual, ethical, religious, spiritual, etc. Any other group conceivable, besides these four, can conveniently be

accommodated under one or the other of them. The inevitability of the division of the society into all these four classes can be understood by eliminating anyone of these hypothetically and trying to look into the consequences. Any organised society cannot survive in case anyone of these groups is liquidated completely. It shows the universality of the vision of the seer behind his idea of representation of the body of the *Puruşa* in the world by the four sections of the society. The denominations he has used for indicating to the respective sections, have been taken from the social order as prevailing around him. That is but natural in any symbolic representation. Subtle ideas are usually indicated to by means of words and objects easily available to their propounders around them with all the limitations of time, space and accessibility. As such, the representative words and objects are sure to have local colour and limited literal connotation and hence are liable to generate misunderstanding about what is sought to be communicated through them. To entertain and promote that misunderstanding is a gross injustice to the author of the idea and its representation. Real justice as well as service to him lies in exploring and finding out the original idea intended to be embodied in and sought to be communicated through the word or the object identified and used by him for the representation concerned.

It is in this spirit that this significant mantra has to be taken. To conceive of any conceit on behalf of any particular section of the society behind it is a misunderstanding steeped in ignorance. To see any hierarchical discrimination against any particular section of the society in it is to display one's unmindfulness of the immediately following mantra in the hymn where the sun, though much higher than the moon in the awareness of the Vedic seer himself, has been said to have been represented by the eyes which definitely are located at a lower point in the human body than the mind representing the moon.

To dilate on this point further, however, the next two mantras go back to the cosmic scale and explain the origin of various gods in terms of different sense organs and vital functions of the *Puruşa* while different regions of the universe form the corresponding parts of his body. Thus the moon is said to have come from his mind, the sun from his eyes, *Indra* and *Agni* from his mouth and air from his breath.[3] Likewise, in the next mantra, it has been stated that the intermediate space was born

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3 चन्द्रमा मनसो जातश्चक्षोः सूर्यो अजायत।
मुखादिन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च प्राणाद्वायुरजायत।। *Ibid.,X.90.13*

out of the navel of the *Puruşa*, the heaven out of his head, the earth out of his feet and the directions out of his ears.[4] In regard to this description, it need not be pointed out any more that the body of the *Puruşa* is no body at all, if it is sought to be understood in terms of the human body, as is suggested by the word *Puruşa*. A hypothetical body has been ascribed to him to account for the direction of the process of the world from the inorganic to the organic. Anything undergoes any process for getting restored to its original status. This is true of water, light and air evidently. Process itself is indeed owing to this basic tendency of things. Basing our argument on this fact, we may presume with a definite sense of justifiability that the movement of the universe from the inorganic to the organic, is due to its original cause having been organic in its structure. Since the human personality is the best example of an organic body so far as the human understanding goes, the Ultimate Reality, supposed to have formed the source of all, has been conceived by the seer after it.

Now when once conceived as such, it has necessarily to be attributed limbs and organs on the analogy of the human body while the origin of things in the universe has naturally to be explained in terms of those limbs and organs. In tracing the source of various components of the universe from limbs and organs of the *Puruşa*, however, the seer evinces his deep understanding of the nature of things. To elucidate the point, when the seer observes that the sun has its source in the eye of the *Puruşa*, he shows his deep understanding of the intimate relationship between the sun and the eyesight. In fact, seeing, which is the function of the eye, is entirely dependent on light whose primary source in the universe is the sun. In view of this fact, it can as well be maintained that eyesight has its origin in the sun. As has already been seen in the discussion on the eighth mantra of the hymn, we can reach the original state of things by exactly reversing this relationship between the sun and the eyesight. Accordingly, if we find in the consequent world that the sun gives rise to the eyesight, it can pretty well be presumed that the sun has its origin in the eye of the *Puruşa*. This is exactly what the seer has said.

As regards the origin of the moon from the mind of the *Puruşa*, it involves more of analogy than of logic. As a matter of fact, unlike the relationship between the sun and the moon, where the former is the source of the latter, it is mind which is the source of the sense organs including the eye

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4 नाभ्या आसीदन्तरिक्षं शीर्ष्णो द्यौः समवर्तत।
पद्भ्यां भूमिर्दिशः श्रोत्रात् तथा लोकॉ अकल्पयन्। । *Ibid.,X.90.14*

and not *vice versa*. Even then, however, the seer shows the origin of the moon directly from the mind of the *Puruşa* while that of the sun from his eye. The reason behind this equation is that in this case it is the functional analogy which has overruled the logic and has dictated its own terms. The pertinent analogy between the moon and the mind lies in the fact that both of them are extremely flexible in their respective forms, sometimes waxing, sometimes waning and sometimes even totally disappearing. Along with this similarity of spectacle between the two, however, a psychological point also is there which too might have helped the seer in his formulation. It lies in the fact that just as the moon shines by the sun's light deflected on her, even so the mind operates by the sensations it receives from the senses, including prominently the eyesight.

So far as the origin of air from the breath of the *Puruşa* is concerned, that too is based on the fact that living beings, including the humans, breath with air. Since air is used in breathing, it may be presumed to have some quality of breathing inherent in it. As such, it is quite legitimate to trace its origin back in the breath of the *Puruşa*. In this case, the law of causality is predominant, as predominant, of course, as it was in the case of the emergence of the sun from the eye or eyesight of the *Puruşa*. This point is dilated upon in full length in the *Aitareya Upanişad* where besides eye, breath, and ear, as is to be discussed right now, other sense organs such as nose and taste have been said to have given rise to earth and to water respectively. Obviously the *Upanişad* has taken inspiration from these Vedic mantras in this regard and has led to its full formulation in various systems of Indian philosophy. In so far as the law of causation is admitted as fully operative in these cases, the account may not be treated as symbolic, though inasmuch as ascription of eye etc. to the *Puruşa* is concerned, that definitely is symbolic. For, in this last case, the eye, etc., as ascribed to him, are not exactly eye etc., but things kindred to them on the ideological or spiritual level.

Tracing the origin of the intermediate space in the navel of the *Puruşa*, of the heaven in his head, and of the earth in his feet, as is recounted in the fourteenth mantra of the hymn, is obviously based on kindred hierarchical position of the factors on both the sides, that is the causal and the effectual. The birth of the directions from his ear, however, is highly significant from the causal viewpoint. The word *dik* is used here in the plural as *diśah* referring thereby most probably to their number as ten, comprising the four main and the intermediate ones besides the upward and the below. Thus the *diśah* is suggestive of the entire space.

Indeed, it, rather than *ākāśa*, is the real equivalent of space. Relationship of space with the ear must have been cognised through sound by virtue of its audibility to the ear on the one hand and its effectiveness in indicating to direction and distance in space on the other. It is how sound might have been determined as the fundamental quality of space. In this case, symbolism is involved in attributing ear to the *Puruşa* and not in the supposition of the birth of space from his ear.

The next mantra, again, is highly symbolic. According to it, there were seven encirclements and twenty one pieces of fuel used on the occasion when the gods while performing the sacrifice bound the *Puruşa* as the animal of sacrifice.[5] What do these encirclements and the pieces of wood signify? *Sāyaṇa* takes the encirclements in the sense of the seven metres, namely, *gāyatri, uşṇik, anuşṭup, bṛhatī, pańkti, trişṭup* and *jagatī*. This is quite possible. But we have also to take into consideration his interpretation of the twenty-one pieces of wood used as the fuel before saying anything about the suitability of this interpretation. In regard to these pieces, *Sāyaṇa's* interpretation is that they represent the twelve months, the five seasons, the three regions of the world, *i.e.*, the heaven, the intermediate space and the earth, besides the sun as the twenty first one. By way of assessing the feasibility of this interpretation, we have to remind ourselves that in this hymn itself back in the sixth mantra the summer season has been stated to have served as the fuel in that primeval sacrifice. By virtue of being a fraction of time, the summer may very well be taken to represent time as a whole. Use of the spring season as *ghṛta* and of the autumn as the stuff of offering in the same mantra, however, makes the position complicated, as, though being themselves also just other fractions of time, they are said to have served as *ghṛta* and the offering rather than as the fuel. But one thing common amongst all the three things represented by the three fractions of time is their ignitability, though in varying capacities. While the fuel produces fire by getting itself burnt, *ghṛta* and the offering do only get burnt in the fire produced by fuel. To bring in the same seasons again besides the remaining two also in the capacity of only the pieces of wood seems, therefore, to be not very much convincing.

But at the same time it has to be admitted that if these twenty-one factors enumerated by *Sāyaṇa*, as also earlier by the *Brāhmaṇas*, do not explain

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5 सप्तास्यासन् परिधयस्त्रिःसप्त समिधः कृताः।
देवाः यद्यज्ञं तन्वाना अबध्नन् पुरुषं पशुम्।। *Ibid.X.90.15*

with any consistency the three times seven pieces of wood which was used in this sacrifice, there is nothing else also to be offered as a convincing alternative to this proposition. In view of the primeval circumstances or state of being in which the sacrifice was being performed, one thing, however, is sure that at that stage if anything was conceivably possible was time-space with the help of which the Supreme Being might have been able to make other things emanate out of him as symbolised by his sacrifice. Having admitted this simple proposition, we may conveniently take time as threefold, that is, the past, the present and the future, and space as sevenfold, as is borne out subsequently by the seven *vyāhṛtis* referring to them. If the seven *paridhis* were to be taken in the sense of the seven metres, as has been pointed out by *Sāyaṇa* also, they would really have to be understood in the sense of seven rhythms, as *Chandas* basically means. These rhythms can be taken to have generated a sevenfold variation in space resulting in the emergence of as many planes of being. Now these divisions of space if multiplied by the divisions of time would result in the number twenty-one. If the division of time suggests to the dynamics of time, divisions of space offer the solid ground for the operation of that dynamics. It is due to their co-ordination that there is process in the world leading to emergence as well as consumption of things here. This process of consumption and re-appearance of things in renewed form seems to have been conceived by the seer as an act of sacrifice to have been undertaken by the Supreme *Puruşa* and to have resulted in the emergence of the world of diversity. In this act, the seven *paridhis* represent the seven rhythms forming the basis of the division of space into seven planes of being. As they by their specific number determine the specific number of the divisions of space, they may be taken to have served as the encircling pieces of wood in the primeval sacrifice and hence to have been called as such. They, in the Veda, may be taken to have been symbolised by the seven metres. The twenty-one pieces of wood used to produce the fire of consumption and transformation would, thus, be symbolical of the seven planes of being in space multiplied by the three divisions of time which through their mutual interaction, as is suggested by the term "*threefold seven*", would have ignited and kept burning the cosmic fire and allowed it to transform the primeval *Puruşa* into the world of diversity.

Since it is the *Puruşa* himself who serves as the primary pre-requisite of the sacrifice including the fire, the fuel, the *ghṛta*, the offering, the animal of sacrifice, the priest, the god, the mantra as well as the laws of sacrifice, it has been observed in the last mantra of the hymn that this sacrifice was

conducted by gods by means of the basic stuff of the sacrifice itself, that is the *Puruşa* and that the result was emanation of the basic laws which control emergence and continuance of the world and the phenomenon of diverse manifestations in it. It is also indicated herein that those who are able to understand the secret of this sacrifice, would go beyond the drudgery of the world to the highest state of blessedness where dwell eternally the gods who were instrumental as priests in making the *Puruşa* undertake the act of performing the sacrifice resulting in the emergence of the world.[6] This statement is the exact prototype of what comes to be formulated in the *Bhagavadgītā* as under:

"*He who comes to realise that Brahman itself is the object as well as the act of offering in the fire of Brahman undertaken by Brahman itself, is sure to reach the state of his oneness with Brahman by virtue of being fully established in the action of Brahman.*"[7]

What is described in this verse as *brahma-karma* is obviously the action related to sacrifice. Here the imperative is neither to perform any actual sacrifice nor to undertake any actual action as such, as there is no possibility of any such performance or action in the real sense of the term. What is suggested is to develop the awareness of this sort in regard to the world as a whole as well as in regard to each moment of one's being. In case one is able to develop such awareness, one is sure to become one with *Brahman*. Thus, what has been stated as '*reaching the state of oneness with Brahman*', the same has been described in the Vedic mantra as *reaching in the company of gods who were instrumental in making the Puruşa offer himself to the sacrifice.*'

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6 यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्।
ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः।। *Ibid.,X.90.16*

7 ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना।। *Bhagavadgītā IV.24*

Sacrifice as a Symbol of Creation

There is another hymn in the *Ṛgveda* which also is devoted completely to the institution of sacrifice. It is *Ṛgveda X.130*. The seer of the hymn is Sacrifice itself described as the son of *Prajāpati* , the Creator. The deity of the hymn is Creation, *Bhavavrtta*. *Bhavavrtta* is also the deity of *Ṛgveda X.129* and *190*. But in these two latter hymns, the process of creation has been narrated almost directly and transparently as if the seer concerned is visualising the whole thing by his own eyes and recounting it as it took place actually. If anything of symbolic nature is used there as the medium by means of which they came upon the vision, that in both the cases is *tapas* which in itself is much more actual than symbolic. Particularly in the case of *Ṛgveda X.129*, things are so matter-of-fact, besides the seer being *Prajāpati* , the Creator himself, that the impression is created as if he were narrating what took place in his own life. In the case of *Ṛgveda X.190*, on the other hand, the seer is *Aghamarṣaṇa*, the son of *Viśvāmitra* and appears as if he were narrating actual experiences of his father as well as of himself. In the hymn under discussion, however, instead of any human or divine seer, it is sacrifice itself which, as it were, is giving the account of creation in its own idiom. It is but natural for it, therefore, to be symbolic in its expression and to draw the symbols from its own area.

Accordingly, it begins its account by taking the world as an act of sacrificial performance involving almost innumerable items of action devoted cumulatively to the Divine. The innumerability of these acts is suggested by the figure one hundred and one. Hundred in the Veda has been used usually as a symbol of fullness. Addition of the number one over and above it, is, thus, indicative of a situation where numeration begins to fail. This may, however, not be exactly true of an actual sacrificial performance, actions involved in which can, in any case, be counted. But it obviously is more than true insofar as the events and actions of the world are concerned, which it has been intended to symbolise. The scope of the symbol is always less comprehensive than that of what it is used to symbolise. Comprehension of the relatively incomprehensible is the basic purpose behind the symbolic usage. Here the figure hundred and one, though actually limited, may go up to the infinity in its connotation depending on the context it is being used in.

In the second place, through the use of sacrifice as a symbol of the phenomenon of the world in all its multitudinousness along with the characterisation of it as a conglomeration of divine actions, *deva-*

karmebhih, the seer has suggested almost effortlessly that the world in any case is eventuating incomprehensibly, though with a certain purpose behind it, and that purpose is its inclination to the Divine. Any action here, no matter howsoever petty apparently, has a definite scheme of things under which it is taking place in the same way as every bit of action in course of sacrifice has got its own significance in the whole spectrum of the performance. What the bewildering diversity and dimensions of the world make it almost impossible or at least extremely difficult to conceive of in the face of the actuality is, thus, easily brought home by creating the model of it in the form of sacrifice. Any sacrificial performance, howsoever multitudinous, prolonged and intricate, has a definite beginning and end besides an understandable orientation towards the objective. This is not so insofar as the actual world is concerned. As such, this model has made it pretty easy to conceive of the beginning and the end as well as the orientation of the otherwise bewildering process or rather conglomeration of processes and events which the world is.

Once the world is conceived as a sacrifice, the seer makes the underlying image still more vivid by symbolising the sacrifice through the act of weaving of the cloth. Sacrifice is a complex affair. First of all the infrastructure of it is laid down with utmost care. It includes preparation of the fire-pit, collecting and fetching the sacred wood, putting it in the fire-pit, kindling the fire and invoking the gods and goddesses. It is against this background that the offerings are made with the recitation of relevant mantras. While laying down of the infrastructure is comparable to the spreading of the warp in course of weaving the cloth, offering to the fire with the recitation of mantras may be compared to weaving the woof on that warp. This is what the seer exactly does. He describes the universal sacrifice as an act of weaving the cloth by the Fathers who have been commissioned for this purpose and are passing their instruction to weave ahead and backward.[1] *Sāyaṇa* interprets *pra vaya* in the sense of creating the conscious world of the agents of enjoyment while *apa vaya* in the sense of creating the world of inconscient objects meant for the enjoyment of those agents. But there is nothing implicit in the mantra in support of this proposition. As such, it can also be suggested equally well that here the seer, taking his stand in the present, is looking into the future on the one hand and the past on the other, the former being in the state of making while the latter in that of unmaking and both these affairs

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1 यो य॒ज्ञो वि॒श्वतस्तन्तु॒भिस्त॒त एक॑शतं देवक॒र्मेभि॒रायत॑ः।
इमे व॑यन्ति पि॒तरो॒ य आ॑य॒युः प्र व॒याप॑ व॒येत्या॑सते त॒ते।। *RV.X.130.1*

being supervised by the gods. If they are gods in view of what is yet to come, they are Fathers in view of what has already become a matter of the past. The actual act of weaving, from this viewpoint, is to see how time as the weaver's instrument is weaving the woof on the thread of space spread out already by the same agencies.

That the cloth of the universal process which we see as being woven automatically or at the most under the supervision of gods and Fathers, has its real beginning in the Highest Being, is made clear in the second mantra of the hymn. In this mantra, the seer observes that really it is the *Puruşa* who spreads the warp and makes it recoil in the highest heaven which is his abode. Thus, he means to suggest that the actual work is done by the Supreme Being himself in the world of delight and perhaps out of sheer delight, as the idea happens to be developed and formulated subsequently in the *Brahma Sūtra*.[2] In relationship to the Supreme Being sitting at the apex of the processes of extension and withdrawal, gods involved in the actual act of creation are just rays of him emerging out of him. This state of things has been described in the hymn of Creation as the rays of the Supreme extending transversely and reaching below as well as above with self-sustaining potentiality inward and its controlled manifestation outward.[3] In the mantra of the hymn under consideration these rays of the Supreme Being are said to take their seats around him reciting the *Sāman* mantras as if to weave the woof into the warp spread by the Supreme.[4]

Thus we see how the seer weaves into one the symbolism of weaving and sacrifice. It relates to weaving insofar as the acts of extending the warp and weaving into it the woof are concerned primarily by the Supreme Being in the highest heaven and secondarily by gods as agencies of actualisation of the former's desires in the world. It returns to the symbolism of sacrifice through the introduction of the idea of chanting the *Sāman* mantras by gods in the proximity of him. To develop the underlying symbolism that way, the seer can fairly well be presumed to suggest that the gods are, as it were, chanting the *Sāman* mantras over and above the *Rks* already recited by the Supreme Being in the capacity of

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2 लोकवत्तु लीला कैवल्यम्।

3 तिरश्चीनो विततो रश्मिरेषामधः स्विदासीɜदुपरि स्विदासीɜत्।
रेतोधा आसन् महिमान आसन् त्स्वधा अवस्तात् प्रयतिः परस्तात्।। *RV.X.129.5*

4 पुमाँ एनं ततनत उत् कृणत्ति पुमान् वि तले अधि नाके अस्मिन्।
इमे मयूरवो उप सेदुरू सदः सामानि चक्रुस्तसराण्योतवे।। *Ibid.,X.130.2*

the *Hotṛ* priest, the most essential one in the whole hierarchy. That way, the world is, as it were, a course of chantings of *Sāman* mantras by gods as primary agents of the sacrifice.

Sacrifice is always performed with reference to a certain divine being, god or goddess. Now when at that primeval stage the gods themselves were serving as priests, a number of questions arise with regard to different means of sacrifice such as deity, *Devatā*, metre, *chandas*, method, *vidhi*, and purpose, *nidāna*, of the performance. This question has been put in the third mantra of the hymn. It starts its query with the kind of the knowledge or wisdom which was there underlying the imperative for the performance of the sacrifice at the most primeval stage. The question has its relevance in the fact that as regards the performance of sacrifice at subsequent stages, there are the Vedic texts and the tradition to serve as the guide. It is by seeking guidance from the texts as well as by following the pattern of the earlier performances that one can easily perform any sacrifice at those stages. But any such help was obviously not available at the primeval stage since the texts were yet to be produced and the tradition was yet to be established, much less to talk of *ghṛta*, fuel and encircling pieces of wood. To quote the seer, "*What was the fundamental understanding, what the model, what the objective, what the ghṛta, what the encircling pieces of wood, what the metre, what the application of the chant when the gods offered sacrifice to the supreme godhead.*"[5]

Answer to these queries has been given in the next two mantras. In the first one of these, it has been stated that the metre *Gāyatri* was born of *Agni* as it is an associate of the latter. The rationale behind *Gāyatri's* association with *Agni* is that if *Agni* is the mouth of the gods, as it has usually been stated in the Brāhmaṇas,[6] *Gāyatri* is the basis of all other metres. It comprises only twenty-four syllables. It is with the addition of four syllables upwards in each case that we get formed consecutively the other metres such as *Uṣṇik, Anuṣṭup, Bṛhatī, Virāṭ, Triṣṭup* and *Jagatī*. Thus it is *via* the *Gāyatri* that all other metres get formed in the same way as it is through *Agni* that all other gods and goddesses become approachable. *Agni* is actually the mouth of all the gods insofar as it is through the offering in *Agni* that the former receive their respective shares out of the sacrifice. Similarly it is by passing *via Gāyatri* that all other

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5 कार्सीत् प्रमा प्रतिमा किं निदानमाज्यं किमासीत् परिधिः क आसीत्।
छन्दः किमासीत् प्रउगं किमुक्थं यद्देवा देवमयजन्त विश्वे।। *Ibid., X.130.3*

6 मुखं वै देवानामग्निः। *Kaṭhaka Samhitā XIX.8*

metres get their respective lengths. Another point that requires explanation in regard to the relationship of *Gāyatri* with *Agni* is the paradox of the former being described on the one hand as having been born of *Agni* and on the other as being an associate of it, *sayugva*. The resolution of this paradox lies in the stylistic variability of the Vedic seer for stating one and the same sort of relationship in more than one way. We, for example, have already seen in case of the famous mantra of the hymn to *Puruşa* how while the *Brāhmaṇa*, the *Rājanya* and the *Vaiśya* are said to be the mouth, arms, and thighs of the *Puruşa* respectively, the *Śūdra* is said to have been produced out of the feet of him.[7] Indeed if the seer gives primacy to *Agni* in its relationship with *Gāyatri* at one place, he is quite likely not only to place them on equal footing at some other place but also to reverse the order of primacy between them elsewhere. This becomes feasible from *Ṛgveda X.72.4* where *Dakşa* is said to have been born of *Aditi* and the latter of *Dakşa*.[8] As per seer *Dirghatamas'* admission, *Ṛks* or metres and gods exist together on a common footing in the eternity of the highest heaven; he who does not understand this secret has little to do with mantras while those who know of it are offered honourable seat among gods.[9] In view of all this, it is clear that there is close relationship between *Agni* and the *Gāyatri* metre, no matter be that relationship stated as one of them being born of the other or simply of co-existence.

The same kind of relationship is stated to obtain between the metre *Uşṇik* and god *Savitṛ*. Here, in this case, the god is said to have been born along with the metre. As regards the rationale of the equation between the two, it seems to be based on the etymological meaning of the word *uşṇik*. This word is derived from the root *vas*, to shine. By virtue of being most lustrous amongst the luminaries, the sun may naturally be conceived to have been born along with brilliance which incidentally happens to be the derivative meaning of the word *uşṇik*.

Next comes the metre *Anuşṭup*. It, in the mantra, is associated with god *Soma*. *Soma* in the Veda is the principle of delight responsible for bringing

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7 ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः।
ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत।। *RV.X.90.12*

8 अदितेर्दक्षो अजायत दक्षाद्वदितिः परि। *Ibid.,X.72.4*

9 ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः।
यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत् तद् विदुस्त इमे समासते।। *Ibid.I.164.39*

joy to the people assuming one form or the other sometimes as a creeper of general or of a special variety, sometimes as the principle of coldness providing protection to the people from heat, particularly as the moon borrowing light and heat of the sun and making them pleasant and soothing. In this respect, *Soma* follows the sun and serves as a complementary to the work of the latter. It is perhaps why the metre coming next to *Uṣṇik* has been named as *Anuṣṭup* and has been associated with *Soma.*

Next to *Anuṣṭup* has been mentioned the metre *Bṛhatī.* Each quarter of this metre consists of nine syllables. Thus, any mantra in this metre comprises thirty-six syllables. It goes without saying that nine is the greatest amongst the single digit numerals. This is perhaps why it has been called *Bṛhatī,* the great one. This metre is associated in the mantra under discussion with god *Brhaspati. Brhaspati* is one of the greatest gods conceived by the Vedic seers. This is why on the astronomical canvas he has been represented by the biggest of the planets, which is named after him. Moreover, due to having compressed in it a certain great idea, every Vedic verse or even a prose formulation is called *brahman.* The word *brahman* is also derived from the same root *brh,* to grow big, as the word *Bṛhatī* on the one hand and *Brhaspati* on the other. *Brhaspati* is called so on account of his having lordship over mantras, *brahmans,* which in their turn are called so on account of having compressed in them profound meanings. It is owing to the element of profundity or greatness obtaining in common in *Bṛhatī* and *Brhaspati* both that they have been envisaged by the seer as cognate to each other.[10] If earlier in the same mantra the seer said that *Gāyatri* was born of *Agni, Savitr* was born along with *Uṣṇik* and Soma became great by virtue of his association with *Anuṣṭup,* here towards the end *Bṛhatī* is stated to have given protection to the word of *Brhaspati.* Since all these four relationships are between the gods and the metres, they are sure to be of equal worth. Under such circumstances all of them are to be treated as of equal value, no matter howsoever diversely conceived ranging from one causing the other, both being co-eval to each other, one getting brilliance from the other as well as one getting protection from the other. From the rich variety of expressions stating the same kind of relationship so diversely, it is evident that the seer is more symbolic than matter-of-fact in his ideas and accounts here as well as elsewhere.

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10 अग्नेर्गायत्र्यभवत् सयुग्वोष्णिहया सविता संबभूव।
अनुष्टुभा सोम उक्थैर्महस्वान् बृहस्पते बृहती वाचमावत्।। *Ibid.,X.130.4*

This conclusion gets further confirmation from the consideration of the varied modes of characterisation of the same kind of relationship in the next mantra also. To translate the mantra:

"Virāṭ is dependent on Mitra and Varuṇa while Trṣṭup is the daily portion of Indra. Jagatī has entered into all the gods. It is by means of this understanding that men were elevated to seerhood."[11]

Here the metre *Virāṭ* is associated with the dual gods *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*. This metre consists of forty syllables, each quarter comprising ten syllables. As we have seen in course of the last lecture, *Virāṭ* is the principle of creativity to have been born first out of the absolute unity. Thus it represents the state of duality in its inception. This is exactly what happens with the numeral ten. If nine is the greatest number in the unified mono-digital form, ten represents the beginning of the di-digital. The co-ordinate duality of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* is the most appropriate symbol of that di-digital numeral. By virtue of its close association with *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, the metre *Virāṭ* represents the principle of duality inherent in the absolute unity and serves as the principle of diversification of the absolute One. Thus the world of diversity as represented by the metre *Virāṭ* is dependent on the operation of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*.

The metre *Triṣṭup* comprises forty-four syllables consisting of four quarters of eleven syllables each. This metre is associated here with *Indra*. It is said to form his portion of the daily sacrifice. From amongst the three libations offered daily to gods in the morning, in the evening and during the midday, while the first two are accompanied by mantras in the *Gāyatri* and *Jagatī* metres, the midday one is offered with recitation of mantras in the *Triṣṭup metre*. When the temporal sequence of morning, midday and evening is viewed in spatial terms, the morning gets associated with the earth, the midday with the intermediate space and the evening with the heaven. *Indra* being the principal deity of the intermediate space, it is but natural for him to get associated with the *Triṣṭup metre*. Otherwise, eleven is a number specific to the *Rudras*, as they are exactly the same in number as distinct from the *Vasus* who are eight as well as *Ādityas* who are twelve. Thus the association of the *Triṣṭup* with *Indra* has been formed by transfusing the spatial sequence instead of the temporal. Such a transference is quite usual with the Vedic

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11 विराण्मित्रावरूणयोरभिश्रीरिन्द्रस्य त्रिष्टुबिह भागो अह्नः।
विश्वान् देवाञ्जगत्या विवेश तेने चाक्लृप्र ऋषयो मनुष्याः।। *Ibid., X.130.5*

seer and reflects anticipation of the modern scientific viewpoint on his part. It obviously has been accomplished by him through the symbolic rather than any logical means. This accomplishment on his part bears out the significant point in ideation that symbolism serves as the precursor of logic not only on the foundational level but also at the apex. Thus what is just symbolic today, has the probability of being discovered as rigorously logical tomorrow or day after tomorrow.

The second hemistich of the mantra mentions the relationship of the *Jagatī* metre with all the gods. It is stated by the seer that the *Jagatī* metre has entered into all the gods. *Jagatī* is a metre comprising forty-eight syllables with each quarter of it consisting of twelve syllables. It is most extensive amongst the metres. The number twelve of the syllables of each quarter of this metre coincides with the number of the *Ādityas*. They are the largest as a group amongst the gods. They, therefore, can be taken as the best representative of all the gods irrespective of their groupings. This point is vindicated by the description of their mother *Aditi* also. Strictly speaking, she is the mother of the *Ādityas* and yet she is described as the mother of gods in general, *devamata*. Representation of the totality by a section of it is possible only in the symbolic way of thinking.

Thus, in one way or the other, the seven metres have been associated with the seven gods, five in individual capacities and two as groups. In this association, while the *Vasus* and the *Ādityas* are mentioned by name, the missing *Rudras* are understood as included in the group *Viśve-devāh*. Thus the seven metres are made to represent all the gods by some law of association or the other. Under these, as has already been shown to some extent, sometimes the metre is said to be born of gods, sometimes the god and the metre are said to have been born together, sometimes the god is said to have derived his eminence from the metre, sometimes the latter is said to have given protection to the word of the former, sometimes the metre is said to be dependent on the god, sometimes the former is said to constitute the food of the latter and finally at one time the metre is said to have entered into gods. Thus one and the same sort of relationship between the metre and the divinity happens to be characterised here in as many as seven ways, elucidating practically seer *Dirghatamas'* celebrated statement that the seers speak of one and the same reality in diverse ways.[12] This is possible only under the symbolic frame of expression.

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12 एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति। *Ibid., I.164.46*

Otherwise, at least the metre's birth from the god, entry into the god, co-birth with the god are mutually irreconcilable. Just as in the case of *Aditi* and *Dakṣa* referred to earlier in this lecture, the mutual birth of each from the other is symbolic of most intimate and yet dynamic and essential oneness leaving to duality to play only the functional role, even so the god and the metre are just two sides of the same coin, one side bearing the figure and the other the script.

The last quarter of the mantra makes out a highly significant point. According to it, the humans got transformed into seers through the realisation of this intimate and dynamic relationship between the god and the metre. On account of its importance in the eye of the seer, this statement gets repeated in the next mantra also which reads as follows:

"By means of that knowledge were transformed the humans into seers, our fathers, after the primeval sacrifice came into being. Visualising with my mind's eye, I get the vision of those primeval beings who performed this sacrifice (of the universal dynamics)."[13]

Metre indeed is the rhythmic mould of expression. It provides for the number of syllables within the limit of which a particular idea is to be communicated with a definite break in the middle and full pause at the end of the first part of the whole statement. Here the idea has to accord well with the limit of the number of syllables prescribed, without getting anyway repressed or curtailed. Such co-ordination between the idea and the expression requires entry into the original depth of one's being which forms the common source of the idea on the one hand and its expression on the other. That depth lies beyond the reach of the senses and the sense-mind. It coincides with the vision of supra-sensory and supramental beings known as gods. As the expression of that supramental scenario also originates from that depth, grasp of it by the human power of expression is like catching hold of the reins of a racing horse by an ordinary hand, as a Vedic seer elsewhere has observed. It requires an accomplished seer to scribble it with the use of his remarkable power of vision and chasteness of expression. His vision has to penetrate through the entire process of creation and reach that extreme depth which forms the origin of everything, just like the modern

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13 चाक्लृप्रे तेन ऋषयो मनुष्या यज्ञे जाते पितरो नः पुराणे।
पश्येन् मन्ये मनसा चक्षसा तान् इमं यज्ञमयजन्त पूर्वे।। *Ibid.,X.130.6*

astrophysicist, with the use of his power of imagination as assisted by his knowledge of scientific laws, looking back to the origin of the universe beyond the beginning of time and expansion of space trillions of light years behind and at the end of so much space intervening. Just as the latter sees something like the primeval ball of fire exploding with a singular bang and making its sparks go on spreading around in the form of galaxies and stars, even so the seer has the vision of gods getting their powers actualised in the form of forces of nature coalescing into the appearance of the tangible universe itself. This is precisely what the seer of the mantra concerned means when he observes that he is seeing with his mind's eye those primeval beings who have performed this sacrifice. The intimate relationship of the Vedic mantra with such a vision of sacrifice is evident from a mantra of *Brhaspati's* according to which the original seat of *Vāk* or sacred word was reached at by means of sacrifice and was found out as having made its entry into the seers. The seven metres are the moulds formed by the human mind at its best to capture the original rhythm of the manifestation.[14]

Since the rhythm underlying the framing of the metre is rooted in the origin of the creation and represents the rhythm operating behind the latter as the seer states, that rhythm has to be recreated through recitation of mantras in course of sacrifice which also is a replica of that primeval sacrifice performed on the level of gods. This is what the seer of the hymn observes in his last mantra which reads as follows:

"Endowed with the wisdom of prayer as well as conversant with the rhythm of the metrical expression and knowledge were the seven divine seers. Having visualised through contemplation the path of those primeval seers, the wise ones took up the device of sacrifice like the charioteer taking up the reins of the chariot."[15]

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14 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टाम्।
तामाभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्त रेभा अभि सं नवन्ते।। *Ibid.X.71.3*

15 सहस्तोमाः सहछन्दस आवृतः सहप्रमा ऋषयः सप्त दैव्याः।
पूर्वेषां पन्थामनुदृश्य धीरा अन्वालेभिरे रथ्योऽन रश्मीन्।। *Ibid.,X.130.7*

Visnu and the Sacrificial Symbolism

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa narrates an interesting legend. According to it, gods and demons both were the sons of *Prajāpati* , the Creator. They, however, became inimical to each other on account of rivalry. At one time, seeing the gods somewhat depressed, the demons took advantage of it and extended their claim over the whole of the creation and proposed to divide it amongst themselves. They went round the creation seeking to divide it with the help of a bull's skin. Eventually the gods came to know of it. They decided amongst themselves to go to the spot where the demons were busy dividing the creation, lest they would have no space to dwell on.

They took *Viṣṇu* for their guide and reached the spot. They pleaded with the demons for their share in the creation as they had a definite claim over it. At last the demons grudgingly condescended to part with only as much space as *Viṣṇu* could cover by lying down. Incidentally, *Viṣṇu* at that time was dwarf in size.

Though so meagre the offer, the gods did not refuse it. They accepted it gladly taking it as equal to the measure of sacrifice. They rather thanked the demons for this concession given to them.

They made *Viṣṇu* lie down in front of them and made a circle of metres on his three sides. They placed *Gāyatri* metre towards his southern side, *Triṣṭup* towards his western side and *Jagatī* towards his northern side.

Having thus encircled him from the three sides, they kindled fire in front of him and began to worship him exerting themselves to go on moving outside with the expansion in the body of Viṣṇu. In this way, they happened to cover the whole of the creation compelling the demons to recede to the extreme end of it.[1]

We see how in this legend Viṣṇu has been put at par with sacrifice. Being defeated by the demons and apprehending their total annihilation, the gods had no way out but to take the help of sacrifice by means of which they not only went across the danger of their extirpation but also came to defeat the evil design of the demons.

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1 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I.2.5.1-7*

The root of the equation between sacrifice and *Viṣṇu* goes back at least to the hymn to *Puruṣa*. As we have already seen in our discussion on that hymn, the *Puruṣa* , on the one hand, offers himself to the sacrifice, and on the other, has also been called *yajña*, sacrifice, in the seventh and the sixteenth mantras of it.[2] Here the equivalence of the sacrifice with the *Puruṣa* is obviously owing to the latter himself assuming the form of all the ingredients of sacrifice, such as the fire, the fire-pit, the oblation, the *ghṛta*, the fuel, the mantra, the deity and the priest, as all of them have been said to have emerged from one or the other organ of him. Thus, according to that hymn, sacrifice is simply the becoming of the being of the Divinity. As the becoming of any being cannot be separated from him on account of the former inhering in him, the sacrifice performed at his level cannot be viewed as anyway different from him. When *Viṣṇu* happens to play the role of the *Rgvedic Puruṣa* in the *Brāhmaṇas*, he automatically comes to be identified with sacrifice. The point of identity between the two has been expressed here making either of the two the subject and the predicate alternatively. There are places where the equation occurs as *yajno vai viṣṇuh* as also as *viṣṇur vai yajñah*. In the statement *yajno vai viṣṇuh*, obviously *yajña* is the subject and *viṣṇu* the predicate. Here *yajña* has been intended to be traced back in its essence to *Viṣṇu*. Exactly opposite is the case of *viṣṇur vai yajñah*. Here *Viṣṇu* has been sought to be visualised in his functional role of sacrifice. Thus the difference between the two sorts of expression is dependent on the primacy accorded to the essence or the function as per the requirement of the occasion. Practically it is something like the difference between the Upaniṣadic statement "*All this verily is Brahman*"[3] and the *Rgvedic* statement "*The Puruṣa himself is all this.*"[4]

There is a point of marked difference between the sacrifice performed by the gods on the level of the *Puruṣa* as recounted in the hymn to *Puruṣa* on the one hand and that on the level of *Viṣṇu* on the other. While the fire-pit of the former was enclosed by seven sticks, the latter was enclosed only by three. In the latter case, the sticks represent the three metres, namely, the *Gāyatri*, the *Triṣṭup* and the *Jagatī*. In the case of the former also, therefore, it gets confirmed that the seven enclosing sticks must

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2 तं यज्ञं बर्हिषि प्रौक्षन् । *RV.X.90.7*
यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवाः । *Ibid.X.90.16*

3 सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म । *Chan.Up.III.14.1*

4 पुरुषेवेदं सर्वम् । *RV.X.90.2*

have been formed of the seven metres. As has already been explained, enclosure in this latter case is symbolic of the seven planes of being or to put it more precisely it is owing to the sacrifice of the *Puruşa* having been performed with the seven enclosures around the fire-pit that the primeval Being came to be diversified in the form of the seven planes of the Becoming. Metres are indeed the fundamental rhythms introduced into the basic creative stuff for accomplishing the act of diversification. The case of *Viṣṇu's* sacrifice, on the other hand, is different. Here the creation is not to be brought in anew but is to be purged of the evil elements obstructing its progress. Their power of obstruction is effective only on the three lower planes of being, that is the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven corresponding to the range of operation of the gods, their brothers. As such, *Viṣṇu*, representing sacrifice, required to be encircled only by three metres, that is, the *Gāyatri*, the *Triṣṭup* and the *Jagatī*. Since the enclosure was made keeping in mind the directions, the enclosing metres used should have been four in number. If that symmetry was discarded in this sacrifice by placing *Agni* itself in the east instead of any metre, that must have been due to a definite reason.

While seeking to solve this problem we have to bear in mind that the shape of the fire-pit corresponding to the three enclosing sticks would be triangular rather than quadrangular. Now in contrast to the quadrangle which is the symbol of completeness and of the balanced state of things, triangle is symbolical of dynamism and movement. This idea is involved in the respective figures of the *Puruşa* and *Viṣṇu* also. While the *Puruşa* is four-footed, the three of which lying eternally in the heaven and the fourth one being involved in the emergence of the world, *Viṣṇu* has been conceived as *trivikrāma*, that is one placing precisely three steps, the first on the earth, the second in the intermediate space and the third in the heaven. This explains well his dynamism used in the purgation and sustenance of the creation.

Accordingly there are only three metres used to encircle *Viṣṇu* as the sacrifice, as has been conceived in the legend. By virtue of their close relationship with the planes of being, as has already been explained, they can very well be taken to represent the triad of the three lower worlds. *Gāyatri,* being related to *Agni,* should symbolise the earth, *Tristup,* being related to *Indra* should stand for the intermediate space, while *Jagatī,* on account of its relationship with the *Ādityas,* should represent the heaven. These planes of being are the actual fields of operation of *Viṣṇu.* By placing one foot on the earth, the other in the intermediate space and the

third in the heaven, he is supposed to have driven out the demons and to have replaced the world, on the proper track of progress.

Viṣṇu's dwarfish form is symbolical of the immensity of the Divine inherent in potential form in the nature of things. Sacrifice is the means of its actualisation in contrast to the lust for the things themselves. The latter is the mode of behaviour of the demons. According to the legend, they defeated the gods and forced them to retire to a corner of the creation and sought themselves to enjoy the fruit of their victory. But the trouble arises due to their plurality. If they unite at all that is only against the gods, their rivals, the latter being a threat to their mode of behaviour. Otherwise, they are a disjointed lot quarrelling with one another out of self-interest. Each one of them seeks to corner as much amenities for his self-enjoyment as possible, leaving nothing for anyone else. This exclusiveness of them raises the problem of dividing the booty of their victory over the gods amongst themselves, as they cannot enjoy it together and keep it intact. Each one of them wanted to have his share separately so that he might not be required to share his amenities with others. This is the demoniac mode of behaviour as opposite the godly where all things belong to the Divine and the individual draws upon it only as much as he needs. This is what has been stated in the Vedic mantra pointing to the effect that all this is to be considered as the abode of the Divine and as such is to be used with a sense of detachment leaving no scope for greed for what belongs to none.[5] Since both the objects of possession and the people willing to possess are undergoing change constantly, to cherish the sense of possession is perverse.

The perversity in the behaviour of the demons, thus, is that having marginalised *Viṣṇu*, the Divinity indwelling each and everything in the dwarfish form, to the extent of total negation, they consider the creation as their own exclusively, no matter in parts. That is why they are seeking to divide it among themselves without willing to leave any fraction of it to anybody else including the gods.

The means they make use of in dividing the earth amongst themselves is also partitive and exploitative. It is a bull's skin taken out from the organic body. It is rendered inorganic besides being peripheral.

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5 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्।। *YV.XL.1*

The approach of the gods is just the reverse of it. As against the demons, who now are in possession of everything, they start with nothing to possess. If they rely on anything which might be helpful to them, that is only *Viṣṇu* and that also in the dwarfish form and size symbolising the inmost possessor and controller of everything as a whole. Unaware of his potentiality and aware only of his outward appearance, the demons consider him as insignificant as a small child and thus concede the piece of land measurable by his body. Thus while the bull's skin was to measure the land to be distributed in parts to the demons, *Viṣṇu's* body was to measure the land to be given to all the gods collectively. Apparently the entire situation was in favour of the demons and disfavour of the gods. But what really was to follow from this state of things was just the other way round.

In contrast to the operation of the demons seeking to divide the whole land amongst themselves, the gods chose the path of sacrifice in which things were to be offered rather than to be possessed. Thus they followed the path of renunciation in lieu of the path of possession.

The result was spectacular. With the offerings being made in the fire, the body of *Viṣṇu* went on expanding until it came to cover the whole of the earth or indeed the entire tangible world. *Viṣṇu*, the all-encompassing essence of things, became all in all with the consequence that the demons relying totally on the exterior of things were completely dispossessed of the entire land.

It is this legend which forms the basis of the later story of *Bali* occurring in the *Mahābhārata* and certain *Purāṇas*. According to that story, *Bali* was the son of a demon known as *Viroćana*. At one time out of arrogance he began to claim his sovereignty over the whole world comprising the heaven, the earth and the nether world. Gods, getting afraid of his arrogance, approached *Viṣṇu* in search of the remedy, as they were left no place to live in. In this case also, *Viṣṇu* reduced himself to the size of a dwarf and went to *Bali* as a young *Brahmaćārin* and asked him for three steps of land for his use. *Bali* willingly granted it to him taking it as insignificant in area. Then *Viṣṇu* began to expand out of his dwarfish size so as to become so gigantic as to cover the whole of the earth in one step and the entire heaven in the other. Though capable of taking the nether world also in his third step, he left it from his own for the sake of *Bali*.

Needless to point out that this story is in substance the same as the *Brahmanic* except for certain marginal changes made upon the original. In

the first place, whereas in the *Brāhmaṇa* the demons have been taken as a class under the generic term *asura* without any centralisation of power among them, here in the story of *Bali* they are replaced by the latter as their king. Secondly, *Bali* is said to have been the son of *Viroćana*, an *Asura*. There is no mention of anyone like *Viroćana* or his son in the *Śatapatha* legend. This name seems to have been borrowed from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* where *Indra* from the side of gods and *Viroćana* from the side of *Asuras* happen to have been sent to *Prajāpati* to acquire the knowledge of the *Ātman* which is absolutely sinless, un-ageing, immortal, rid of grief, rid of hunger, rid of thirst, true in its desire and true in its will. While *Indra* devotes himself for a long period to the pursuit of the *Ātman* under the guidance of *Prajāpati* , *Viroćana* returns to *Asuras* with the understanding that *Ātman* is nothing but the image of one's body as visible in anything reflecting it, such as water or mirror. In this connection, the *Upaniṣad* has made a highly significant remark regarding the character of *Asuras*. It observes that *Asuras* are those who are self-conceited, faithless and un-sacrificing and lying under the impression that this body itself is the *Ātman*, they adorn their dead with clothes and ornaments and keep food, etc., beside his body.[6]

This statement of the Upaniṣadic sage very well suggests who the *Asuras* are whom *Viroćana* and his son *Bali* represented and ruled over. Fundamentally they were the same as the *Brahmanic Asuras*, as the latter also were given to exclusive material possession. As such, their antagonism with the gods and eventually with *Viṣṇu* was a foregone conclusion on account of the gods having been instrumental in laying the foundation of the institution of sacrifice and *Viṣṇu* being the sacrifice itself by virtue of having sacrificed himself for bringing the world into being in the form of the primeval *Puruṣa*.

The legend of the *Asuras* in its *Brahmanic* and *Puranic* both the versions is meant for bringing practically to the fore the forces which are contrary to the spirit of sacrifice, as also the point how lack in that spirit proves suicidal to the forces concerned. It also, in contrast to the above, shows that the spirit of sacrifice, howsoever humble and self-negating initially, is sure to bring real fulfilment to the person concerned.

This is evident also from the rite of *Viṣṇu-kramaṇa* as performed at the end of *Agni-cayana*, that is kindling of the sacrificial fire. After having

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6 *Ch.Up. VIII 8.1-5*

accomplished the kindling, the sacrificer moves three steps from the sacrificial pit to the fire to be invoked, *Āhavanīya* and raises the latter gradually to the middle of the body and then above. The first step is taken by him in the name of the *Gāyatri* metre, which is associated with the earth and is thus supposed that by this act he has acquired his sovereignty over the whole of the earth as the gods had acquired it by offering sacrifice to *Viṣṇu* and the latter himself had come to possess it at the time of creation. Next he takes the second step in the name of the *Triṣṭup metre*, which is associated with the intermediate space. By taking this step, he is supposed to have become sovereign ruler of the intermediate space on the same line as indicated in the case of the earth. Lastly, he takes the third step in the name of the *Jagatī* metre. *Jagatī* is associated with the heaven. By taking this step, he is understood to have got his full access to the heaven as the gods had got it by virtue of offering sacrifice to *Viṣṇu* and the latter himself had got it by virtue of taking the step itself. The reason behind all this ascension is the elimination of the forces of obstruction coming in the way of it. The step symbolises the action leading to their elimination as well as the act of ascension itself. Taking the step by the sacrificer is symbolical of *Viṣṇu's* real act of creation and elimination of the forces of obstruction coming in the way of sustenance and upward progress. By taking these steps, the sacrificer is supposed to have become *Viṣṇu* himself and therefore to have acquired the latter's power of sovereignty over the three planes of existence, the earthly, the intermediate and the heavenly.[7]

In the Vedic scheme of things, *Viṣṇu* represents the supreme principle of delight inherent in things. This is evident from the statement about him that in his highest step there is a spring of honey.[8] It is out of that delight that things have come into being, are sustained in their respective positions and are seeking to multiply. Since all this creative act traces its root back to that fundamental principle of delight called figuratively *Viṣṇu*, the latter has been ascribed all sorts of action in the world. The gradation of actions in the world, such as physical, vital and mental, has led to *Viṣṇu* being conceived as taking three steps, the first on the earth, the second in the intermediate space and the third in the heaven. This

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7 विष्णोः क्रमोऽसि सपत्नहा गायत्रं छन्द आ रोह पृथिवीमनु वि क्रमस्व।
विष्णोःक्रमोऽस्यभिमातिहा त्रैष्टुभं छन्द आरोहान्तरिक्षमनु विक्रमस्व।
विष्णोः क्रमोऽस्यरातीयतो हन्तो जागतं छन्द आरोह दिवमनु विक्रमस्व।। *YV.XII.5*

8 विष्णोः पदे परमे मध्व उत्सः। *RV.I.154.5*

order in the steps indicates to the seer's progressive or indeed evolutionary view of things behind their dynamics.

Thus, in the view of the seer, it is due to the descent of *Viṣṇu* that there is the world along with the delight implicit in it. It is also due to his ascent from the physical to the vital and from the vital to the mental and the supramental that there has emerged the possibility of quantification in that stuff of delight. The first part of this journey, *i.e.*, descent to the world, has been left implicit in the Veda in relationship to *Viṣṇu*. In the second part of it, however, he has been shown to have become highly active. His three steps, indeed, are figurative representation of the same activeness or dynamics. That the world has to develop from the physical to the vital and from the vital to the mental and supramental, is the real idea behind the three steps of him.

Thus the account of *Viṣṇu* as a gigantic person having the human form and striding vastly in the universe as also beyond just in three steps and resting in his highest abode above ultimately is symbolic of the real permanence inherent in things and persons, as the principle of sustenance and delight, motivating them to proceed towards that delight through the dynamics of development. By taking the so-called three steps he has not only created and stabilised the world in its wholeness as well as multiplicity but has also prepared the path for their movement in that direction.

The *Viṣṇu-krama*, moving like *Viṣṇu*, accomplished in course of the sacrifice is a symbolic act envisaged to indicate, through the sacrificer, to man's will to emulate him in this respect, remove the hurdles in the path of progress and reach ultimately the state of highest beatitude. This is what the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* indicates by describing the *Ātman* as of dwarfish size taking its seat in the middle of the body and controlling the direction of the *Prāṇa* and the *Apāna*[9] and alternatively as *Viṣṇu* setting the highest possible ideal before man, which the latter has to achieve through self-control, power of discretion and will.[10] By making offerings to the dwarfish *Viṣṇu* seated in the midst of them as also in the midst of the encircling metres, as the legend goes, if the gods, representing the

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9 ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति।
मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते।। *Kaṭha Up. V.3*

10 विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्।। *Ibid., III.8*

power of the senses and the mind, show the way to developing the principle of delight inherent in the individual, by bringing him to his full stature so as to become all-pervading, they create the model of the ultimate ideal state of things which is divine and completely rid of the demonic.

Horse Sacrifice

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Horse-sacrifice has been referred to for the first time in a couple of hymns occurring in the first *maṇdala* of the *Ṛgveda*. These hymns have been seen by seer *Dirghatamas* and are placed in the *Samhitā* immediately before the famous *aśyavāmīya* hymn which in a certain sense is most philosophical amongst all the hymns of it. The hymns under consideration have *Aśva*, horse, as their deity. In them, there are a number of points to bear out the fact that the seer *Dirghatamas* was very well familiar with the horse-sacrifice.

He starts the first one of these hymns with the prayer that gods like *Mitra, Varuṇa, Āryaman, Āyu, Indra, Rbhūs* and *Maruts* may not condemn him as he, along with some other enlightened persons, is going to recount the heroic deeds of the horse, which is of divine origin. In the next mantra there is the account of a multicoloured goat being led in front of the horse, which is bedecked with ornaments. Their destination is the lovely house of *Indra* and *Pūṣaṇ*. In the next mantra it is stated that the goat is to form the stuff of the oblation along with the horse. In the next mantra, there is a reference to the priests such as the *Hotṛ* , and the *Adhvaryu* as well as to other reciters of prayers and enlightened people. The sixth mantra refers to the hewers of the sacrificial post called *yūpa*, to the carriers of it as well as to those who carve the knob of the post so as to decorate it. It also has a reference to the carriers of the food for the horse. In the seventh mantra, it has been stated that the seers and reciters of mantras are delighted at the sight of the horse which is going to form a good companion of the gods. In the next mantra, it has been prayed that the halter and the heel-ropes, the head-stall and the girth as well as the grass put in the mouth of the horse at the moment, all these also may accompany him to the place of the gods. In the ninth mantra, it is desired that no fraction of the flesh of the horse would be allowed to go waste, howsoever minimal in quantity. In the next mantra even the undigested food lying in the entrails of the horse is desired to reach the gods. The next mantra has the reference to the cooking of the flesh of the horse. The fourteenth mantra in the hymn expects that the starting point of the movement of the horse, his place of resting and rolling, the ropes that were tied to his feet, the water he drank, the food he consumed, all these also should reach the gods. The sixteenth mantra has a reference to the piece of cloth that was used in covering the body of the horse. The

eighteenth mantra refers to the ribs of the horse thirty-four in number, which were expected to be dissected one by one carefully and with declaration about them. And yet in the twenty-first mantra, it is hoped that the horse would not die nor would even be injured; on the contrary, he would very well draw the chariot rushing to the divine. In the last mantra of the hymn *Aditi* is prayed to remove all the sins from the sacrificers while the horse is expected to bring sovereignty to them after having been rendered into the oblation to the gods.[1]

While this hymn in this way gives the details of the mobilisation of the horse, slaughtering of him, cooking of his flesh, performance of the sacrifice and its relevance to attainment of sovereignty almost in a matter-of-fact way, the second one bears out the finer ideas working behind this gory act and the roots of the symbolism underlying them. In the very first mantra, the horse is said to have been not an ordinary one but one born of the sea or rather the heavenly water and, therefore, destined to deserve praise by virtue of his high birth. In the next mantra, he is said to have been given by *Yama*, harnessed by *Trita*, mounted by *Indra*, bridled by *Gandharva* and carved out of the sun by the *Vasus*. On account of all these associations of him with the gods, he in the next mantra, is described as virtually *Yama, Aditya* and *Trita* themselves as per a certain secret law obtaining behind the working of the world. He in the same mantra has further been reported to have his three bonds in the heaven.[2] In the next mantra, his threefold bond is extended to the waters and the ocean and in view of it, he is considered as *Varuṇa* himself indicating to the seer the highest point of his origin.[3] In the next mantra the rope with which the horse was led to the sacrificial ground is said to have been guarded by the agencies keeping vigilance on *Ṛta*.[4] Thus, when the horse gets identified with the gods, the rope by which he was led becomes elevated to the status of *Ṛta,* the principle of universal dynamics. In the ninth mantra, the horse is envisaged as of golden horns, iron-footed and as speedier than *Indra* himself and moving as fast as the mind.[5] Finally,

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1 *RV.I.162.1--22*

2 असि॒ यमो॑ अस्यादि॒त्यो अर्व॑न्नसि॒ त्रितो॑ गुह्ये॑न व्र॒तेन॑।
असि॒ सोमे॑न स॒मया॒ विपृ॑क्त आ॒हुस्ते॒ त्रीणि॑ दि॒वि ब॑न्ध॒नानि॑। ।*Ibid.I.163.3*

3 त्रीणि॑ त आहुर्दि॒वि ब॑न्ध॒नानि॒ त्रीण्य॒प्सु त्रीण्य॒न्तः स॑मु॒द्रे ।
उ॒तेव॑ मे वरु॒णश्छ॑न्त्स्यर्व॒न् यत्रा॑ त आ॒हुः प॑र॒मं ज॒नित्र॑म्। । *Ibid.I.163.4*

4 अत्रा॑ ते भ॒द्रा र॑श॒ना अ॑पश्यमृ॒तस्य॒ या अ॒भिर॑क्षन्ति गो॒पाः। ।*Ibid.,I.163.5*

5 हिर॑ण्यशृ॒ङ्गोऽयो॑ अस्य॒ पाद॒ मनो॑जवा॒ अव॑र इन्द्र॒ आसीत्। *Ibid.I.163.9*

in the last mantra of the hymn, he is said to have reached the highest abode of gods where dwell the divine parents, *Aditi* and *Dakṣa.*[6]

The process of raising the horse above its animality to divine universality has got all the more clearly stepped up in the next basic text on the horse-sacrifice, namely, the *Yajurveda.* In this *Samhitā* chapters *22 to 25* have mantras to be recited on the occasion of the horse-sacrifice. Some of these mantras have been taken particularly from the second hymn of *Dirghatamas* referred to above. Besides them, however, it has got more than 180 mantras of its own dealing with this sacrifice. Thus, in these mantras this sacrifice gets reflected in much larger details. Indeed the *Śatapatha's* account of the sacrifice has been elicited by way of commenting on these Yajurvedic mantras.

The mantras devoted to horse-sacrifice in this *Samhitā* open with an account of the incident of the sacrificer being made to put on in his neck a golden coin followed by taking hold of the rope of the horse. Although the coin is being put in his neck by the priest and yet it is supposed as if the hands of *Aśvins* and *Pūṣaṇ* are being used in this act. The rope itself is regarded as the rope of *Ṛta,* which was cognised as such previously by the great seers in course of their inquiry into the basic nature of things. Accordingly the horse is taken as the sustainer of things around it, as the process of creation as well as the controller and bearer of the creation. He is the stuff of the Divine having been made to pass through the process of creation under the guidance of *Ṛta.* Everything related with him, including his neighing, expanding the nose, being tied by rope at several places in his body, his sitting, standing, galloping, turning, taking jerks, drinking water and eating grass is regarded as worthy of being offered to the Divine. He is sanctified to *Prajāpati* as he is said to have had his origin in the latter along with the sun and the moon being taken as his glories. His glory is said to have extended to the night, to the earth, to the fire, to the planets, etc. As such, he is regarded as standing beyond the reach of human beings and is, therefore, implored upon to dedicate his body by himself and enjoy its self-offering.[7] It has been said at this point how *Agni* at the time of creation assumed the form of an animal wherewith the gods performed the cosmic sacrifice resulting in his getting sovereignty over the creation. So was the case of *Vāyu* in the intermediate space and of

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6 उप॒ प्रागा॑त् पर॒मं यत् स॒धस्थ॒मर्वा॒ अच्छा॑ पि॒तरं॑ मा॒तरं॑ च। । *Ibid.I.163.13*

7 स्व॒यं वा॑जिँस्त॒न्वं॑ कल्पयस्व स्व॒यं यज॑स्व स्व॒यं जु॑षस्व।
म॒हि॒मा ते॒ऽन्येन॒ न स॒न्नशे॑। । *YV.XXIII.15*

Sūrya in the heaven, as per the observation made in the mantra.

Having thus been equated with *Prajāpati* , the horse is made fascinating enough to be approached by the queens of the sacrificer symbolising acceleration in the process of creation. At this point, a lot of joke, even of the most obscene variety, is cut between the queens and their attendants on the one side and the priests on the other. It reaches the same sort of vulgarity as is depicted in *Khajurāho, Koṇārk* and very many other temples of the medieval period calling for a lot of debate on their relevance particularly in the proximity of the Divinity supposed to indwell the temple. It is also to be noted that this obscene conversation takes place at a time coinciding with the occasion of the later festival of *Holi* which also happens to be infested with such abusive and obscene talks.

This conversation in the context of the horse-sacrifice is followed by recitation of a mantra addressed to *Dadhikrāvan*, the divine horse responsible for the dynamics of the creation. It is this *Dadhikrāvan*, which is the deity of the famous *Hamsapadī* mantra of the *Ṛgveda* where the former is described as the swan of the sky, *Vasu* of the intermediate space, priest sitting beside the sacrificial pit, guest sitting inside the sacrificial vessel, one indwelling amidst the humans, indwelling sacred places, indwelling *Ṛta*, the universal dynamics, indwelling the highest space, as a product of the water, of the earth, of *Ṛta*, of the mountain and eventually as *Ṛta* itself.[8] Recitation of the mantra addressed to *Dadhikrāvan* in which he has been described as a horse winning and powerful, is supposed in the second part of it to bring good taste to the mouth and to prolong the span of life of the person concerned.[9] It is sufficient to suggest that the conversation involving obscenity on the occasion of the horse-sacrifice was planned consciously and deliberately under a well contemplated scheme of things. The author of the scheme was fully aware of the undesirability of the conversation as a matter of fact. Even then, however, if he made provision for it, that was meant for the purgation of baser desires so that the earthly could be made worthy of being transformed into the divine. This is as much true in regard to the horse as it is in regard to the sacrificer. The horse indeed was to serve as

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8 हंसः शुचिषद् वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्धोता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत्।
नृषद् वरसदृतसद् व्योमसदब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतम्।। *RV.IV.40.5*

9 दधिक्राव्णो अकारिषं जिष्णोरश्वस्य वाजिनः।
सुरभि नो मुखा करत् प्र ण आयूंषि तारिषत्।। *YV.XXIII.32*

a model of the possibility of such a transformation. The sacrificer, along with his retinue, was supposed to follow him in this course of transformation. The earthly horse was supposed to have been transformed into the divine *Dadhikrāvan*, which literally means that agency which becomes mobile the moment anything is placed on it. It is really the dynamics of the Supreme Being which takes no time to become active as soon as the latter is sought to be turned into an object. It is like the best of the horse, who moves onwards as soon as the rider manages to ride on his back. Contemplation on such an agency symbolised by such a horse is supposed to clean the mind of all baser desires, and the mouth of all the defilement created by the utterance of words communicative of those desires. It is like the emergence of the *Yogi Kṛṣṇa* from within the dalliance of the *Gopi Kṛṣṇa*.

This conversation in the *Samhitā* is followed by the ceremony of pricking the body of the dead horse with needles made of silver, gold and glass.[10] The purpose of this symbolic act also is purification of the body of the horse. For, in a mantra occurring subsequent to it, it has been prayed that the heaven, the earth, the intermediate space and the air may fill up the holes created by the pricking of the needles so that the sun, along with the asterisms, may take him to the higher world.[11] The body of the horse is made predominantly of the earthly stuff. When it is sought to be transported to the heaven, it has got to be balanced with the inclusion of the stuff derived from the air, the intermediate space and the heaven. This deficiency is made up by the ceremony of the pricking and allowing the air, etc., to fill up the gap thus created. Incidentally, this ceremony may be taken to be the root or at least an early instance of application of the acupuncture therapy so much in air today and strongly believed to have been of Indian origin. The efficacy of this therapy also, as prevalent today, is supposed to lie in restoring the balance of different constituents of the body at the point of the disease through the pricking and allowing the air, etc., to make their inflow. In the case of the sacrificial horse, however, it is just symbolic meant for making the horse's body worthy of being transformed into something heavenly.

The *Samhitā* also includes a detail on the animals, which were tied to different parts of the body of the sacrificial horse. For instance, a goat

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10 रजता हरिणीः सीसा युजो युज्यन्ते कर्मभिः। *Ibid.,XXIII.37*

11 द्यौस्ते पृथिव्यन्तरिक्षं व्युच्छिद्रं पृणातु ते।
सूर्यस्ते नक्षत्रैः सह लोकं कृणोतु साधुया।। *Ibid.,XXIII.43*

with black neck and representing *Agni*, was tied to the forehead of the horse; a sheep dedicated to *Sarasvatī* was tied to the front portion of his body; a pair of black and white goats dedicated to *Aśvins* was tied below his jaws; another pair of white and black goats dedicated to *Soma* and *Pūṣaṇ* was tied to the navel of him; a white animal dedicated to *Sūrya* was tied to the right flank of him while a black animal dedicated to *Yama* was tied to his left flank. A pair of animals dedicated to *Tvastṛ* was tied to the back feet of the horse; an animal dedicated to *Vāyu* was tied to the tail of him while a dwarfish animal dedicated to *Viṣṇu* was tied to his tail.[12] In all there were as many as twenty-one sacrificial pillars used in this sacrifice with sixteen animals tied to each one of them and seventeen to the middle one. All these animals were supposed to accompany the horse in his journey to the heaven as his assistants. The horse, indeed, was regarded as the representative of *Prajāpati* while the rest of the animals as that of the other gods. As such, as per the account of the *Samhitā* itself the horse was considered as something divine having the entire universe as well as the heaven under his jurisdiction of action and pervasion.

It is against this background formed by the *Samhitā* that the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* opens with the grand symbolism of the sacrificial horse. Here the sacrificial horse is said to have dawn as his head, the sun as his eye, air as his breath, *Agni Vaiśvānara* as his mouth, year as his body, sky as his back, atmosphere as his belly, earth as his hoof, quarters as his sides, intermediate quarters as his ribs, seasons as his limbs, months and half months as his joints, days and nights as his feet, stars as his bones, clouds as his flesh, sand as his food, rivers as his blood-vessels, mountains as his liver and lungs, herbs and vegetation as his hair, the rising sun as his forepart and the setting sun as his hind part, lightning as his yawning, thunder as his shaking, rain as his urination and speech as his voice of neighing.[13] Day is taken as the *mahiman* vessel in his front while night as the same behind him. The sea is considered as his source.[14]

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12 *Ibid.,XXIV.1 -- 1*

13 उषा वा अश्वस्य मेध्यस्य शिरः सूर्यश्चक्षुर्वातः प्राणो व्यात्तमग्निवैश्वानरः संवत्सर आत्माश्वस्य मेध्यस्य। द्यौः पृष्ठमन्तरिक्षमुदरं पृथिवी पाजस्यं दिशः पार्श्वे अवान्तरदिशः पर्शव ऋतवोऽगानि मासाश्चार्धमासाश्च पर्वाण्यहोरात्राणि प्रतिष्ठा नक्षत्राण्यस्थीनि नभो मांसानि। ऊवध्यं सिकताः सिन्धवो गुदा यकृच्च क्लोमानश्च पर्वता ओषधयश्च वनस्पतयश्च लोकान्युद्यन्पूर्वार्धो निम्लोचञ्जघनार्धो यद्विजृम्भते तद्विद्योतते यद्विधूनुते तत्स्तनयति यन्मेहति तद्वर्षति वागेवास्य वाक्। *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I.1.1*

14 अहर्वा अश्वं पुरस्तान्महिमान्वजायत। तस्य पूर्वे समुद्रे योनी रात्रिरेनं पश्चान्महिमान्वजायत। तस्यापरे समुद्रे योनिरेतौ वा अश्वं महिमानावभितः संबभूवतुः। । *Ibid.,I.1.2*

It is obvious from this account that the horse, as referred to here, is not any actual one. Much less is the horse-sacrifice a mere offering of the dissected body of the horse to the fire. Without leaving us a guessing, the *Upaniṣad* goes ahead to characterise the horse as death while the latter as appetition: "*In the beginning, verily there was nothing here; all this was covered by death or, indeed, by appetition, for, appetition is death.*"[15]

Since appetition was a sheer urge in vacuity, it naturally tended first to concretise itself. The process of concretisation resulted in the production of water. The froth of the water, when solidified, assumed the form of the earth. The earth presented a solid ground for the operation of the appetition. Since it was of fiery nature, its excessive operation resulted in it emitting heat which assumed the form of fire.[16] The fire produced out of it the sun and the air. Thus, besides water, there were born three other entities, fire, sun and air. With the birth of air, the primeval appetition became organic. The eastern direction served as his arms, the western as his tail while the two sides became his hip-bones. The southern and the northern directions served as his two sides while the sky became his back, the atmosphere his belly and the earth his chest. As a whole, this colossus stands firmly in the waters.[17]

Having fire as its central being, the appetition cannot get satisfied unless it has something else to consume. However, since it, as yet, is the sole being there, it can have any other object only by producing the same out of itself. Being organic, it can produce the object concerned organically. As procreation requires both, the masculine and the feminine, the appetition used its mind as the principle of masculinity and speech as that of femininity. The semen effused in this manner assumed the form of year. The year took a year to grow to its full size in the womb. When it was born, the appetition wished to devour it. Being scared, the year cried out *bhan*. It was this sound of the scared babe which, when fully developed, assumed the form of speech.[18]

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15 नैवेह किंचनाग्र आसीत्। मृत्युनैवेदमावृतमासीत्। असनायया। असनाया हि मृत्युः। *Ibid.,I.2.1*

16 आपो वा अर्कः। तद्यदपां शर आसीत् तत् समहन्यत। स पृथिव्यभवत्।
तस्यामश्राम्यत। तस्य श्रान्तस्य तप्तस्य तेजोरसो निरवर्तताग्निः। *Ibid.,I.2.2*

17 *Ibid.,I.2.2*

18 सोऽकामयत द्वितीयो म आत्मा जायेतेति। स मनसा वाचं मिथुनं समभवदशनाया मृत्युः।
तद्यदेतद्रेत आसीत् संवत्सरोऽभवत्। न ह पुरा ततः संवत्सर आस। तमेतावन्तं कालमबिभो यावान् संवत्सरः।
तमेतावतः कालस्य परस्तादसृजत। तं जातमभिव्याददात्। स भाणकरोत्। सैव वागभवत्। *Ibid.I.2.4*

Then the Creator thought that if he killed the babe, he would cause only diminution in his food. He, therefore, thought to make use of speech and mind again. Through their union, he created *Ṛks, Yajusas, Sāmans, chandas*, sacrifices, subjects and animals. Being appetition, he began to eat whatever he produced. On account of his nature of eating everything, he is called *aditi* (from *ad*, to eat).[19] The acts of creating and eating were to his immense liking. Consequently, he resolved to manifest himself with a still greater gusto. This resulted in his exertion. As a result of it, energy oozed out of his body. It was his *prāṇa*. The oozing of the *prāṇas* resulted in the swelling of the body.[20] Though he had departed from the body, he was still interested in making use of it. This could be done by utilising it as a sacrificial offering. Since the inflated body was thus turned into a sacrificial offering by re-incarnating the appetition in it, the whole thing led to the formation of the idea of horse-sacrifice. Moreover, since the Creator had left the body un-ensouled for one year, the horse is left roaming for the same duration in the actual sacrifice.[21]

The sun, along with the events associated with it, is conceived as a good example of the above creative process. It is conceived as the horse-sacrifice. The year is taken as its *Ātman* and fire as its original fire which appeared in a liquid form. Thus the sun and the fire represent the primeval horse-sacrifice and the water which is said to have been produced out of the devotional acts of the Creator. Since the tangible world around us is the creation of the sun through the medium of fire, it is said to be an offshoot or *Ātman* of them. As fire is the product of the sun and as both of them are consumptive, both together have been characterised as two forms of one and the same deity, which is Death.[22]

In view of its obvious transparency, it would be convenient to interpret this legend from its lower end. In the beginning, it must be made out that

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19 स ऐक्षत यदि वा इममभिमंस्ये कनीयोऽन्नं करिष्य इति। स तया वाचा
तेनात्मनेदं सर्वमसृजत यदिदं किञ्चर्चो यजूंषि सामानि छन्दांसि यज्ञान् प्रजाः
पशून्। स यद्यदेवासृजत तत् तदत्तुमध्रियत। सर्व वा अत्तीति तददितेरदितित्वम्। *Ibid.I.2.5*

20 सोऽकामयत भूयसा यज्ञेन भूयो यजेयेति। सोऽश्राम्यत्। स तपोऽतप्यत।
तस्य श्रान्तस्य तप्तस्य यशो वीर्यमुदक्रामत्। प्राणा वै यशो वीर्यम्।
तत् प्राणेषूत्क्रान्तेषु शरीरं श्वयितुमध्रियत। *Ibid.I.2.6*

21 सोऽकामयत मेध्यं म इदं स्यादात्मन्व्यनेन स्यामिति। ततोऽश्वः समभवत्।
यदश्वत् तन्मेध्यमभूदिति तदेवाश्वमेधस्याश्वमेधत्वम्। *Ibid.I.2.7*

22 एष ह वा अश्वमेधो य एष तपति। तस्य संवत्सर आत्मायमग्निरर्कस्तस्येमे लोका
आत्मानस्तावेतावर्काश्वमेधौ। *Ibid. I.2.7*

the unobstructed movement of the sun for the whole year along with a multitude of rays around it seems to have served as a prototype of the idea of the ceremony in which a horse is made to move for the whole year at will under the protection of a strong guard. The unobstructed movement of the horse is suggestive of the sovereignty of the king over the territory covered by the animal. The killing of the horse at the end of the year is symbolic of the sun coming to the end of its annual course. The swelling of his body may very well stand for the inflated look of the solar orb at the end of the year. Offering of the horse to the sacrificial fire may be taken to have been conceived after the sun supposed to have consumed itself in its own fire at the end. Since the sun, in combination with fire, consumes not only its products throughout the year but also itself at the end of the year, it was quite natural to conceive it as the god of death or Death itself. It supposedly eats itself as well as everything else produced by it, and yet manages always to come back in the same capacity unscathed. This is enough to make it be conceived as Death.

The above equation finds support from a number of accounts scattered throughout the Vedic literature. Representation of the sun by horse is quite usual in these texts. In the *Hamsavatī* mantra and one preceding it, the triad of the sun, the air and the fire is envisaged as a horse known as Dadhikrāvan.[23] In the *Aśya Vāmīya* hymn of the same *Samhitā*, the sun again is viewed as a horse having seven names and drawing a chariot having only one wheel attached to it. The chariot is also conceived as having three axles and being un-ageing and un-decaying. All the creations are said to rest in it.[24] The seven names are the seven rays of the sun. In the *Atharvaveda* also time is regarded as a horse having seven reins and one thousand eyes and being un-ageing and rich in semen.[25]

The *Śatapatha* has a number of references to prove the symbolic affinity between the sacrificial horse and the sun. For instance, at the time of making the selection, it was particularly kept in mind that the horse was unparalleled in energy and speed. The reason for this, as given in the *Brāhmaṇa*, is the sacrificial horse's oneness with the sun. Since the sun is unrivalled, the horse also has got to be so.[26] At another place, the guards

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23 *See Footnote No.8 above.*

24 सप्त युञ्जन्ति रथमेकचक्रमेको अश्वो वहति सप्तनामा।
त्रिनाभि चक्रमजरमनर्वं यत्रेमा विश्वा भुवनाधि तस्थुः।। *Ibid., I.164.2*

25 कालो अश्वो वहति सप्तरश्मिः सहस्राक्षो अजरो भूरिरेताः।
तमा रोहन्ति कवयो विपश्चितस्तस्य चक्रा भुवनानि विश्वा।। *AV.XIX.53.1*

26 अथ यद्दक्षिणायां धुर्यप्रतिधुर एष वा एष य एष तपति। *SB.XIII.4.2.2*

of the horse are instructed not to restrict him in his movement as he is the sun itself irresistible in its movement.[27] Moreover, while the *Upaniṣad* regards the rising sun as the forepart and the setting sun as the hind part of the horse,[28] the *Brāhmaṇa* takes the horse as well as the sun to have been born of the eye of *Prajāpati* .[29] The timing of the sacrifice is also significant. The *Brāhmaṇa* refers to a controversy as to when to begin the performance. After much deliberation, the priests agree to a date close to the end of the month of *fālguna*.[30] Beginning from this date the horse is required to roam throughout the year and come back to the starting point only at the end. As it coincides with the sun's movement as scheduled according to the Vedic calendar, it is corroborative of the symbolic affinity between the horse and the sun.

On the basis of the above references, we can take the horse-sacrifice as a miniature replay of the movement of the sun in its various phases. Most probably kings of those days performed this sacrifice by way of imitating the sovereignty of the sun. Through the imitation they would have sought to emulate the celestial body in its unchallenged rule over the firmament. This view finds support in a *Rgvedic* mantra in which *Indra* and *Agni* are asked to place upon him who has performed the horse-sacrifice, mighty and un-ageing sovereignty like the sun's in the sky.[31]

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27 तमेत उभये देवमनुष्याः संविदाना अप्रत्यावर्तयन्तः संवत्सरं रक्षन्ति।
तद्यन्न प्रत्यावर्तयन्त्येष वा एष य एष तपति।क उ ह्येतमर्हति
प्रत्यावर्तयितुं। यद्धयेनम्प्रत्यावर्तयेयुः परागेवेदं सर्वं स्यात्तस्मादप्रत्यावर्तयन्तो
रक्षन्ति। *Ibid.,XIII.4.2.16*

28 *Brh.Up.I.1.1*

29 द्विरूप एवैषोऽश्वः स्यात् कृष्णसारंगः। प्रजापतेर्वा एषोऽक्ष्णः समभवद्।
द्विरूपं वा इदञ्चक्षुः शुक्लञ्चैव कृष्णञ्च। तदेनं स्वेन रूपेण समर्धयति। *SB.XIII.4.2.3*

30 सा यासौ फाल्गुनी पौर्णमासी भवति तस्यै पुरस्तात्षडहे वा सप्ताहे वा। *Ibid.XIII.4.1.4*

31 इन्द्राग्नी शतुदाव्न्यश्वमेधे सुवीर्यम्।
क्षत्रं धारयतं बृहद्दिवि सूर्यमिवाजरम्।। *RV.V.27.6*

11

The sun, however, does not represent the horse-sacrifice in its entire signification. It is rather a secondary product of what the sacrifice represents essentially. It is regarded as only one phase of *Agni* which in itself is merely an offshoot of the tired body of *Prajāpati*. As the *Upaniṣad* has it, when *Prajāpati* wished to become himself, he moved about worshipping. It was out of this movement that water was born. When solidified, the froth of the water became the earth. When he exerted himself through the medium of the earth, *Agni* was born. The latter manifested itself in three phases which assumed the form of the sun, the air and the fire. Being born of one and the same *Prajāpati*, this triad of entities tended to be organic. Its head was constituted by the east, the two arms by the two sides, the tail by the west and the hip-bones by the two sides related with them, the two flanks by the south and the north, the back by the sky, the belly by the atmosphere and the chest by the earth.[1] According to the above legend, as the sun constitutes only one of the three phases of the fiery being, it cannot be taken in the same context to stand for the primeval Being. As such, it can represent only the exterior of the sacrificial horse.

The real horse, on the other hand, has been characterised as death. It cannot be ruled out that this characteristic of the horse might have to do something with the fate he met in the actual sacrifice. Being destined to embrace death, he could possibly be identified with death. But the matter is not left there. It is further complicated by the characterisation of death as appetition. It is the horse as appetition which, with the desire to become himself, moves about worshipping and producing water and other objects. Being of the nature of appetition, he desires to become himself. This time, however, worship could not be used as an effective means to that end. Having become organic and tangible, he was required to take recourse to some other suitable mode of self-manifestation which eventually was procreation. But how could procreation be possible when appetition alone was there? To meet this requirement, the appetition used its mind as the principle of masculinity and speech as that of femininity. Thus the mind and the speech of the appetition are said to have given birth to year which obviously signifies time. In this way, time may be regarded as the product of the power of conceptualisation and expression

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1 *Bṛh.Up.I.2.1—3*

inherent in the desire for becoming. The fleeting nature of time is attributed to its flying away from the appetition which sought to devour it at the time of its birth. What the flying time uttered during the scare, is said to have assumed in us the form of speech. Its anticipation of the danger of self-destruction may be supposed to have resulted in the emergence of mind in us. Thus the flying time came to produce all that is the object of mind and speech. What time is going on producing, the appetition is coming from behind devouring. The appetition of today would be the death of tomorrow. Thus appetition and death are two consecutive phases of one and the same process of becoming. The utility of the process lies in serialising death. The serialising, in its turn, is made possible by the process of time. If time itself were consumed by the primeval appetition, the possibility of the world would have been nullified. It was the escape of time which made possible the serialisation of the process of devouring by the appetition. Thus it is the perpetual serialisation of death by time which is the next higher meaning of the horse-sacrifice. *Aśva*, horse, is obviously cognate to *aśanāyā*, appetition. From this viewpoint, *aśvamedha* is the sacrifice of appetition and transcendence of death.

Being equated with appetition, death can be transcended by going behind it. Since appetition is a desire, it must have its *locus standi* in a certain being. The *Upaniṣad* refers to that being as *Prajāpati* and symbolises him by the sacrificial horse. Indeed, it is for the sake of enabling him to symbolise such a being as *Prajāpati* , that the horse is given the cosmic form, the dawn being his head, the sun his eyes, air his *prāṇa*, fire his mouth, sky his back, directions his flanks and year his *Ātman*. Due to the horse representing the totality of the being, the horse-sacrifice is regarded as most comprehensive of all the sacrifices. While other sacrifices are offered to lesser gods, horse-sacrifice is made to *Prajāpati* himself.[2] The horse is offered directly to him. This sacrifice is regarded as the king of all the sacrifices.[3] It is supposed to represent the totality of existence.[4] The cosmos itself is taken to have been designed after this sacrifice. As the *Brāhmaṇa* puts it, *Prajāpati* had the desire to have all his wishes fulfilled by comprehending all the individuals. It was as the device adopted by him for fulfilling this desire that he contemplated and

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2 प्रजापतिर्देवेभ्यो यज्ञान् व्यादिशत्। स आत्मन्नश्वमेधमधत्त.....तेभ्य एतानन्नहोमानकल्पयत्। । *SB XIII.2.1.1*

3 प्राजापत्योऽश्वः। *Ibid., I.1.2.2*
राजा वा एष यज्ञानां यदश्वमेधः। *Ibid.,XIII.2.2.1*

4 सर्वं वा अश्वमेधः। *Ibid.XIII.4.2.17*

envisaged this sacrifice.[5] Finally, the sacrifice is identified with *Prajāpati* himself.[6]

Now, when equivalence has once been established between *Prajāpati* and the horse, what is the relevance of the immediately following passage which tells us how in the beginning there was only death which had enshrouded all this and that the death was equivalent to desire for eating? Is this primeval death something other than *Prajāpati* ? If not so, how can he be called death? Again, what is the ground for characterising death as the desire to eat? It is these equations which present the real difficulty in the understanding of the account. But, at the same time, it is likely that these very equations possess the real clue to the understanding of the symbol, as the whole of the later account is based on them.

Fortunately a clue to it is provided by the *Upaniṣad* itself a little later in the following prayer:

"Lead me from non-being to being; lead me from darkness to light; lead me from death to immortality."[7]

The *Upaniṣad* regards the prayer as mystic and explains it as follows:

"When he said ``lead me from non-being to being,'' non-being is verily death, being is immortality. ``Lead me from death to immortality'', ``Make me immortal'', this is what he said. As regards ``Lead me from death to immortality'', there is nothing secret in it."[8]

Thus, the *Upaniṣad* considers *asat* and *tamas* as equivalents and takes *mṛtyu* as symbolic of both. This is because of the obviousness of the meaning of *mṛtyu* in contrast to that of *asat* and *tamas* which are regarded as mystic. The crux of the meaning of the prayer, according to the *Upaniṣad*, is the aspiration to go to immortality from mortality.

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5 प्रजापतिरकामयत सर्वान् कामानाप्नुयां सर्वा व्यष्टीर्व्यश्नुवीयेति। स एतमश्वमेधन्त्रिरात्रं यज्ञकतुमपश्यत् तमाहरत् तेनायजत तेनेष्ट्वा सर्वान् कामानाप्नोत् सर्वा व्यष्टीर्व्याश्नुत। *Ibid., XIII.4.1.1*

6 प्रजापतिरश्वमेधः। *Ibid.XIII.2.2.13*

7 असतो मा सद् गमय तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय मृत्योर्मामृतं गमय। *Bṛh. Up.I.3.28*

8 स यदाहासतो मा सद् गमयेति मृत्युर्वा असत् सदमृतं मृत्योर्मामृतं गमयामृतं मा कुर्वित्येवैतदाह। तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमयेति मृत्युर्वै तमो ज्योतिरमृतं मृत्योर्मामृतं गमयामृतं मा कुर्वित्येवैतदाह। मृत्योर्मामृतं गमयेति नात्र तिरोहितमिवास्ति। *Ibid,.I.3.28*

This ultimate desire of man has a definite metaphysical background. The aspiration for the psychological escape has its root in the cosmology. While thinking of the latter, Vedic sages invariably come to *asat, tamas*, etc., and find the ultimate ground in the principle of immortality characterising the Supreme Being. This is what we find in the famous *Hymn of Creation.* Denying finality to *sat* and *asat* on the one hand and to *mṛtyu* and *amṛta* on the other, the seer eventually comes to the Supreme Being as lying beyond the densest possible darkness.[9] What is put here in this order, the same is recounted in the reversed order in another hymn of the *Samhitā.* According to it, *Ṛta* and *satya* were born of the luminous *tapas* followed by the emergence of night, pulsating ocean, year and the rest of the tangible creations successively.[10]

The *Upaniṣadic* account also follows almost the same sequence. Since it starts with the description of the sacrificial horse, which is symbolic of *Prajāpati* , the latter must be regarded as the fundamental being admitted by the *Upaniṣad* here. Being a function of the horse, the horse-sacrifice should occupy the place next to the horse. It is the same as the Rgvedic *Ṛta. Ṛta* and *yajña* are synonymous also. Thus, in place of the night of the *Ṛgveda, mṛtyu* would be the third principle in the Upaniṣadic scheme of things. The equivalence of the two images symbolising the common state of the reality might lie in the common all-enshrouding character of them. Night makes things disappear. So does death. The *Upaniṣad* refers to the all-enshrouding character of death when it observes that in the beginning all this was covered by death.[11] If the *Upaniṣad* chooses the image of death to represent the same state, it is probably to suit the context of the horse-sacrifice which involves the death of the horse. Just as night serves only to enshroud things and by no means to annihilate them, so death should imply only disappearance and by no means total annihilation. Death does the same with the life of the individual as night does with the movement of the sun. This function may be characterised as one of concealment or self-absorption. Self-absorption is by no means a totally negative process. It, on the contrary, is a ground for intense dynamism in future. The self-absorption of the night prepares the background for the leap of fresh light while its inactivity leads to enhanced dynamism. So is the case with death. It is the conservatory of a new lease of life. As such,

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9 *RV.X.129 1--3*

10 ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसो ऽध्यजायत।
ततो रात्र्यजायत ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः।।
समुद्रादर्णवादधि संवत्सरो अजायत। *Ibid.X.190.1--2*

11 नैवेह किञ्चनाग्र आसीन्मृत्युनैवेदमावृतमासीत्। *Bṛh.Up.I.1.2*

it is rightly put by the *Upaniṣad* as *aśanāyā*, the desire for eating or attaining.

Naturally the first manifestation of the desire would be the act to consolidate oneself. This is true of the Upaniṣadic *aśanāyā* also. It is said to have produced water by way of consolidating itself. It is interesting to note that the Rgvedic hymn also points out how ocean was born of the night. All this probably means to suggest that after throwing himself into self-absorption and the consequent self-oblivion, the primeval Being, while on way to self-manifestation, assumed initially the form which may be imagined as the pulsating ocean. It is probably this primeval form which is characterised in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* as *ambhas* while the form emerging from it as *apas*.[12] The words *arka* and *apas* used in the *Brhadāraṇyaka* probably mean the same two consecutive states in the course of manifestation. Particularly *arka* seems to refer to the essence immediately preceding the formation of matter. The latter is represented in the *Upaniṣad* by the earth, which is said to be just the froth of water solidified. When the self-oblivious *Prajāpati* manages to consolidate himself in the form of matter, he finds a solid ground for promoting his creative acts. Under the pressure of his strenuous efforts and *tapas*, matter oozes out in the form of a life-giving element which diversifies itself in the form of heat, light and breath as represented by the fire, the sun and the air respectively. Being supposed to have emerged from *Prajāpati* , these entities are regarded as constituents of his body.

Up to this, the desire for self-manifestation took the higher path of meditation and *tapas* which is the path of self-concealment and self-projection. But, when he reached the state of tangible embodiment, *Prajāpati* tended to multiply himself through procreation. Being all alone, he had no alternative except to use his mind and speech respectively as the male and the female principles of procreation. This, again, seems to be based on the Rgvedic *Hymn of Creation*, according to which desire is the first seminal product of mind.[13] As the medium of expression of the mental content, speech is rightly conceived as the female partner of mind. This marriage of the mental and the vocal on the plane of the primeval Creator is supposed to have served as the prototype of conjugal love on the physical plane. It must, however, be pointed out that mind and

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12 आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत्...। स इमॉल्लोकानसृजत। अम्भो मरीचीर्मरमापोऽदोऽम्भः परेण दिवम्। द्यौः प्रतिष्ठाऽन्तरिक्षं मरीचयः। पृथिवी मरो या अधस्तात्ता आपः। *Ait.Up.I.1.1-2*

13 कामस्तदग्रे समवर्ततााधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत्। *RV.X.129.4*

speech of *Prajāpati* are primeval and pre-temporal. Time itself is born only as the first babe of the couple. Our speech is regarded as only a modulation of the original sound produced by time as the child.

In spite of having become procreative, *Prajāpati* did not cease to be self-conservative. Due to the polarity of these tendencies in him, he is said to have tended to devour his own progeny which is time. This simply means a tug-of-war in him between the creative tendency of continuity and the self-absorptive tendency of simultaneity. While the creativity wants to develop continuity, the other tendency wants to swallow it in its simultaneity. Since the creative process was well intended and started by *Prajāpati* himself with a view to developing from within his eternal being a self of becoming, a little resistance on the part of the newly born babe was sufficient to deter him from devouring it and to impress upon him the necessity of satisfying his desire for eating by allowing the eatable to grow at the same time. Thus it is through the twofold process of production and re-absorption that the world has come to develop the present form. It involves regression as well as progression, assimilation as well as production, death as well as birth. Being inclusive of the totality of these dual processes, he is taken as *Aditi*, the divine mother, who produces everything out of herself and at the same time makes all this her food.[14]

Prajāpati , however, was not satisfied with this much of give and take, which is the ordinary form of sacrifice. He wanted to give it greater accentuation. With this end in view, he put in still more effort, with the consequence that this time his vitality oozed out of him. It is this impoverished body of *Prajāpati* which is said to have assumed the form of the sacrificial horse.

Thus *Prajāpati* may be regarded as the potentiality of the world which, for the sake of getting manifested, exerts itself, oozes out from within, diversifies itself so as to assume organic form, takes to the way of androgynous procreation, the first babe being time, adopts the dual course of procreation and consumption and finally that of self-offering. The last act represents completion of the process of actualisation of the potential. This is what horse-sacrifice seems to symbolise. In the case of the king performing it actually, it involved the desire for becoming the lord of all the subjects (*praja+pati*), building a mighty force, putting in effort to win and consolidate a vast empire, relishing the fruit of his labour, staking his sovereignty by setting free the sacrificial horse and ultimately

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14 सर्वं वा अत्तीति तददितेरदितित्वम् । *Bṛh.Up.I.2.5*

having fulfilment of his ambition in the dedication of the horse. In the case of an individual practising the *aśvamedha-sādhanā*, it would involve tracing his origin in the primeval desire, actualising his potential being in the manner *Prajāpati* produced the world and ultimately offering himself to the universal Being. Being thus offered, just as the horse becomes universalised and one with *Prajāpati*, so the individual has the prospect of becoming universalised and one with him.[15]

The present account abounds in a number of interesting ideas. In the first place, it propounds the view of the origin of the world from the desire in the Creator to become himself. It brings out the primeval creative desire through the desire to eat. Just as a farmer cultivates his fields with a view to fulfilling his need for food, so *Prajāpati* is supposed to have created the world for the sake of satisfying his appetite. He creates the world for the sake of eating it. Accordingly, he is said to have tried to eat time, his first creation. But, had time yielded to *Prajāpati 's* desire, the latter's plan would have been frustrated in the same way as is that of a farmer who eats his first products root and branch, without making any provision for the seedlings. The escape of time, however, resulted in seriating the processes of production and consumption. It explains the necessary concomitance of birth and death here in the world. In the second place, by way of explaining the origin of the world of multiplicity from the sole *Prajāpati* , the *Upaniṣad* refers to several forms of creation which are very much viable from the biological viewpoint. According to it, the common mode of procreation is preceded by one which is androgynous and by a still older one which is divisive. In the third place, in view of being an offshoot of *Prajāpati* passing through the threefold process of procreation, each individual is regarded as a miniature of him. Thus he has the possibility of realising *Prajāpati* within himself as his own primeval self. The way to the realisation is the understanding of the process of evolution and dedicating oneself unreservedly to the will of *Prajāpati* in the same way as the horse does by allowing himself to be sacrificed. This dedication would so universalise him that, just like the sacrificial horse, each organ of his body would be viewed as a constituent element of the universe. In the fourth place, the philosophy of dedication opens the way to the development of the concept of *Ātman* in all its metaphysical profundity. Moreover, it promotes the concept of *Brahman* as well. If the individual of

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15 *Cf. Śaṅkara and Ānandagiri on Bṛh. Up. I. 1. 1*

this sacrifice is elevated to the status of the *Ātman*, *Prajāpati* is transformed into *Brahman*. When the individual is identified with *Prajāpati* , the *Ātman* gets identified with *Brahman* in the subsequent parts of the *Upaniṣad*. *Prajāpati*, *Ātman* and their mutual relationship form the prototypes of *Brahman*, *Ātman* and their interrelationship.

As regards the antecedents of the ideas contained in the above account, it is interesting to note that besides the hymn quoted already, which provides certain basic cosmogonic insights into it, there is another hymn in the same *Samhitā* which seems to have formed the background against which the main features of this detail have been developed. The reference is to the well known *Hymn to Devāh*. Firstly, like the *Upaniṣad*, this hymn also puts forth the view that the Being has come out of the non-Being. If the *Upaniṣad* regards *Prajāpati* as the agent who has brought about this miraculous transformation, the *Samhitā* attributes all this to *Brāhmaṇaspati*. The only important difference between the two texts on this point is that while the *Upaniṣad* has employed the image of a worshipper producing water through worship, the *Samhitā* uses the image of the blacksmith who blows his shapeless piece of iron into various sorts of utensils and implements.[1] In the second place, while the *Upaniṣad* observes that *Prajāpati* , after producing the sun and the air, besides the earth and out of it the fire, manifested himself in such a manner as to have various directions as different parts of his body, the *Samhitā* says that one *Uttānapad* gave rise from within him to the earth and from that to various directions.[2] In fact, the Upaniṣadic account gives us a clue to the understanding of the *Rgvedic Uttānapad*. He seems to be just the Upaniṣadic *Prajāpati* conceived here in one of his prototypal forms as a cosmic person having his back stretching himself upward. In the *Samhitā*, he is also called *Dakṣa* who is the father as well as son of Aditi. *Aditi* is the infinity forming the background of the finite's manifestation and re-absorption. In so far as the infinity also is the manifestation of *Prajāpati*, *Aditi* is called his daughter and in so far as it forms the background of his further manifestation, she is said to be his mother. In either way, she is really his dynamics. The *Upaniṣad* regards *Aditi* also as the dynamics of *Prajāpati* by characterising her as his *aśanāyā* or death.[3] In

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1 ब्रह्मणस्पतिरेताः सं कर्मार इवाधमत्।
देवानां पूर्व्ये युगेऽसतः सदजायत।। RV.X.72.2

2 देवानां युगे प्रथमेऽसतः सदजायत।
तदाशा अन्वजायन्त तदुत्तानपदस्परि।। *Ibid.*X.72.3
भूर्जज्ञ उत्तानपदो भुव आशा अजायन्त। *Ibid.,X.72.4*

3 अदितेर्दक्षोअजायत दक्षाद्वदितिः परि। *RV.X.72.4*
अदितिर्ह्यजनिष्ट दक्ष या दुहिता तव।। *Ibid., X.72.5*
स यद्यदेवासृजत तत्तदत्तुमध्रियत ।सर्वं व अत्तीति तददितेरदितित्वम्। *Brh.Up.I.2.5*

the third place, if the *Samhitā* ascribes the birth of gods to *Aditi*, the *Upaniṣad* takes gods, along with *Asuras*, as sons of *Prajāpati*.[4] In the fourth place, if the *Samhitā* recounts how gods, when born, dwelt and played in water, the *Upaniṣad* maintains that *Prajāpati* produced everything, including gods, out of water.[5] Finally both the texts regard the sun to have been born out of water.[6]

In view of the above comparative data, it seems probable that the author of this Upaniṣadic passage had in his mind not only the Vedic cosmogony in general but also this hymn in particular. While the general cosmogonic outline of it seems to have been derived from the famous *Bhāvavṛttam Hymn* and the idea of making self-sacrifice by *Prajāpati* in the form of an animal from the *Hymn to Puruṣa*, the above five details have their probable source in this *Hymn to Devāh*. As such, we are now in a position to contend that by combining with it the cosmogonic ideas, the *Upaniṣad* has made horse-sacrifice a symbol of cosmic creation and destruction as well as of psychic projection and withdrawal.

While the above hymns provide the sacrifice with its philosophical background, there are two other hymns which form its antecedent in regard to the rest of the ideas. That horse-sacrifice was actually in practice at the time of the *Samhitā*, is evident from the following mantra:

"Those who cut the wood for the sacrificial post, those who carry the sacrificial post, those who furnish the sacrificial post with its upper part and those who fetch the cooking material for the horse, let their will stimulate us."[7]

May be that the cult of horse-sacrifice came down from the pre-Vedic period. It is also not unlikely that it might have started purely with man's

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4 तां देवा अन्वजायन्त भद्रा अमृतबन्धवः। *RV.X.72.5*
द्वया ह प्राजापत्या देवाश्चासुराश्च। *Bṛh.Up.I.3.1*

5 यर्देवा अदः सैलिले सुसंरब्धा अतिष्ठत।
अत्रा वो नृत्यतामिव तीव्रो रेणुरपायत।। *RV.X.72.6*
आपो वा अर्कस्तद्यदपां शर आसीत् तत् समहन्यत। सा पृथिव्यभवत्।
तस्यामश्राम्यत्। तस्य श्रान्तस्य तप्तस्य तेजोरसो निरवर्ताग्निः। *Bṛh.Up.I.2.2*

6 अत्रा समुद्र आ गूल्हमा सूर्यमजभर्तन। *RV.X.72.7*
स त्रेधात्मानं व्यकुरुतादित्यं तृतीयं वायुं तृतीयं स एष प्राणस्त्रेधा विहितः। *Bṛh.Up.I.2.3*

7 यूपव्रस्का उत ये यूपवाहाश्चषालं ये अश्वयूपाय तक्षति।
ये चार्वते पचनं सम्भरन्त्युतो तेषामभिगूर्तिर्न इन्वतु।। *RV.I.162.6*

greed for the horse's flesh. But, coming down to the age of the *Ṛgveda*, it had developed around it a certain religious sanctity. No more was the sacrificial horse supposed to be an earthly creature. Rather he was taken to have been given by *Yama*, yoked by *Trita*, controlled by *Indra*, held by a *Gandharva* and manufactured out of the sun by the *Vasus*.[8] On account of involvement of these divine agencies in his formation and action, the horse is sought to be identified with each one of them:

"You are Yama; you are the sun; O horse, you are Trita by a secret law; you are thoroughly associated with Soma, your associations are said to be three in the heaven."[9]

Involvement of the divine agencies in the life of the horse is based on a certain principle of identity. The divinities are said to co-operate with the horse in different phases of his life because each one of them is supposed to participate in his real being. It was, therefore, quite natural for them to be eager to claim their shares in the horse's body. *Indra* and the other gods come to the sacrifice particularly with that end in view.[10] They wait for the flesh which is being cooked, ask for the smell and even beg for the meat.[11] Even the smallest fraction, the most insignificant part, the most repulsive content of the body, such as his half-digested food, fat, smell, etc., is aspired for by the gods.[12] Not only the bodily contents, even his actions, such as going out, sitting, turning, etc., are desired to be sent to gods.[13] What is associated with the horse, even only externally, is also supposed to go to them. Under this category come such articles as the horse's clothes, ornaments, ropes, reins, etc.[14] The seer is fully conscious of the fact that while trying to eulogise the horse to such an extent, he may easily be taken otherwise by gods. But, at the same time, he is sure of the fact that the misunderstanding would have a place for it only if the horse is taken to be an earthly creature. As soon as one is convinced of his divine origin, all such misunderstandings naturally get

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8 यमेन दत्तं त्रित एनमायुनगिन्द्र एणं प्रथमो अध्यतिष्ठत्।
गन्धर्वो अस्य रशनामगृभ्णात्सूरादश्वं वसवो निरतष्ट।। *Ibid.,I.163.2*

9 असि यमो अस्यादित्यो अर्वन्नसि त्रितो गुह्येन व्रतेन।
असि सोमेन समया विपृक्त आहुस्ते त्रीणि दिवि बन्धनानि।। *Ibid.,I.163.3*

10 देवा इदस्य हविरद्यमायन्यो यो अर्वन्तं प्रथमो अध्यतिष्ठत्। *Ibid.,I.163.9*

11 *Ibid.,I.162.12*

12 *Ibid.,I.162.9*

13 *Ibid.,I.162.14*

14 *Ibid.,I.162.16*

dispelled.[15] Here the case of the identity of the horse becomes similar to that of *Kṛṣṇa's* as presented in the *Bhagavadgītā*. *Kṛṣṇa* says that people ignore him because they do not understand the secret of his divine origin. Similarly the worship would have been misplaced if the horse was viewed as an earthly creature. However, as soon as the secret of his divine origin is unravelled, the mistake gets automatically rectified.

It is evident from the above account that the *Upaniṣad* does not make an innovation in the symbolic thinking when it takes the horse as *Prajāpati*. For, the *Ṛgveda* itself has presented him as universal and divine in character. It regards him even as *Aditi*.[16] Needless to remind ourselves that the *Upaniṣad* also calls the horse *Aditi* on account of his representing the universal dynamics which devours as well as produces the world.

There is yet another mantra which describes how the horse, while being taken to the actual place of sacrifice, meditates with his mind drawn towards the divinity. In front of him is being taken a he-goat, who forms his navel, *nābhi*. Behind him are poets chanting mantras.[17] What does the he-goat signify? The word *nābhi* denotes the axle of the cart. The axle, though comparatively small, controls the wheel. While the wheel moves round, the axle remains fixed. As such, in the mantra under consideration, *aja* must occupy the same position in relation to the horse as the axle occupies in relation to the wheel. It is true that in actual performance the horse was led by a he-goat. As such, here *aja* would mean only the he-goat. But, when the horse stands for an embodiment of all the gods combined or for *Prajāpati* himself, *aja* should mean something matching that. A direct clue to it is found in the fact that in the immediately following hymn, which, too, is ascribed to the same seer, *aja* is said to be the inexplicable principle forming the basis of all the other six worlds.[18] Here *aja* cannot mean he-goat. It must signify the unborn cause of everything. Now, if *aja* can denote that principle in this hymn, it is not improbable that the he-goat of the sacrificial account symbolises that primeval unborn or Eternal Being. This interpretation is further supported by yet another mantra, which reads as follows:

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15 यद् वाजिनो देवजातस्य सप्तेः प्रवक्ष्यामो विदथे वीर्याणि। *Ibid.,I.162.1*

16 अनागास्त्वं नो अदितिः कृणोतु। *Ibid.,I.162.22*

17 उप प्रागाच्छसनं वाज्यर्वा देवद्रीचा मनसा दीध्यानः।
अजः पुरो नीयते नाभिरस्यानु पश्चात्कवयो यन्ति रेभाः।। *Ibid.,I.163.12*

18 अचिकित्वाञ्चिकितुषश्चिदत्र कवीन् पृच्छामि विदमने न विद्वान्।
वि यस्तस्तम्भ षड्इमा रजांस्यजस्य रूपे किमपि स्विदेकम्।। *Ibid.I.164.6*

"In the navel of aja lies one in which rest all the creations."[19]

In this mantra, *aja* denotes the supreme primeval Being who manifests himself in the form of the ocean, while the ocean gives rise to a germ serving as the source of creation.[20] Thus *aja* is the Supreme Being, the ocean is its dynamics while the primeval germ is *Prajāpati*. The horse being led by the he-goat in the actual performance, therefore, must symbolise the creativity of *Prajāpati* surging out owing to the dynamics of the Being. In keeping with this symbolic framework, the Upaniṣadic account of the horse as born of the ocean would naturally signify *Prajāpati's* birth out of the dynamics of the Supreme Being.[21] It is not without significance that the Rgvedic mantra also describes the horse as to have emerged from the ocean or water.[22]

The *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* calls the horse *Ṛta*.[23] This also supports the above interpretation of the horse and the sacrifice. As already made out, *Prajāpati* is a representation of *Ṛta*. As such, putting of the horse as *Ṛta* would mean only his symbolic equation with *Prajāpati*. The rope, by which the horse is being led onward, would then signify the principle of his manifestation in the form of the world. This rope is understandably the same which is referred to as *raśmi* in the *Hymn of Creation* and in the one immediately following it.[24] In the former hymn, *raśmi* is said to be the principle binding together the primeval manifestations. In the latter hymn, on the other hand, it is associated with a horse. Just as the horse takes up the reins, so the wise took up the *raśmi* after discovering the path of their precursors.[25] In the earlier mantras of the hymn, the rope is indicated to as a thread and ray and is directly associated with the sacrifice. Here the sacrifice is said to be woven all around by means of threads, which again are described as divine actions.[26] The context of the

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19 अजस्यनाभावध्येकमर्पितं यस्मिन्विश्वानि भुवनानि तस्थुः। *Ibid., X. 82.6*

20 परो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्या परो देवेभिरसुरैर्यदस्ति।
कं स्विद्गर्भं प्रथमं दध्र आपो यत्र देवाः समपश्यन्त विश्वे।। *Ibid.,X.82.5*

21 समुद्र एवास्य बन्धुः समुद्रो योनिः। *Bṛh.Up.I.1.2*

22 यदक्रन्दः प्रथमं जायमान उद्यन्त्समुद्रादुत वा पुरीषात्। *RV.I.163.1*

23 इमामगृभ्णन् रशनामृतस्य। *VS.XXII.2*

24 तिरश्चीनो विततो रश्मिरेषामधः स्विदासी ३ दुपरि स्विदासी ३ त्। *RV.X.129.5*

25 पूर्वेषां पन्थामनुदृश्य धीरा अन्वालेभिरे रथ्यो न रश्मीन्। *Ibid.,X.130.7*

26 यो यज्ञो विश्वतस्तन्तुभिस्तत एकशतं देवकर्मेभिरायतः। *Ibid.,X.130.1*

description is the offering of the one divinity by all the gods.[27] This account evidently refers to the sacrifice of *Prajāpati* as a horse.

Thus the above account makes it evident that the horse-sacrifice was in actual practice at the time of the *Ṛgveda* as well as at the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* and probably even later too and that it was taken to be almost as symbolic at the time of the *Samhitā* as at the time of the *Brhadāraṇyaka*. What the *Upaniṣad* actually does is to bring the scattered symbolic material of the *Samhitā* together and use it in the exposition of its own ideas.

In conclusion, we are now in a position to establish the following in regard to the blending of the actual and the symbolic in the horse-sacrifice. As an actual rite, the sacrifice has the possibility of antedating even the Vedas. It is so old, indeed, that in a Rgvedic hymn it is used as the proper name of a king-seer. This designation suggests that the institution was open for the wise seer as much as for the would-be sovereign. While the king would have performed the sacrifice actually by setting free the horse and offering the same to gods, a detailed account of which is found a littler later in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the seer took it in the spiritual sense right from the Rgvedic period. He would have taken the word *medha* not so much in the sense of sacrifice as in the sense of wisdom. Thus, the word, as associated with *aśva*, would have come to signify for him "the wisdom of the horse" rather than the horse-sacrifice.[28] Transplantation of a horse's head carried out on the body of *Dadhyaṅ* by *Aśvins* for the sake of having access to the most coveted wisdom seems to be a form of the sacrifice practised by the seers.[29] The hymn to *Devāh*, *Puruṣa* and *Bhāvavṛttam* provide this secret practice with a comprehensive philosophy. It is, indeed, a blending of these two approaches together which constitutes the burden of the section of the *Brhadāraṇyaka* under consideration. The *Upaniṣad* accomplishes this task by transforming the sacrificial detail into a symbolic allegory. The sacrificial horse has been used by it to symbolise *Prajāpati* on the divine plane, the sun on the physical and the *Ātman* on the spiritual.

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27 कासीत्प्रमा प्रतिमा निदानमाज्यं किमासीत्परिधिः क आसीत्।
छन्दः किमासीत् प्रउगं किमुक्थं यद्देवा देवमयजन्त विश्वे।। *Ibid.,X.130.3*

28 यो मु इति प्रवोचत्यश्वमेधाय सूरये।
ददद्दृचा सुनिं युते ददन्मेधामृतायते।। *Ibid., V.27.4*

29 तद्वो नरा सनये दंस उग्रमाविष्कृणोमि तन्यतुर्न वृष्टिम्।
दध्यङ् ह यन्मध्वाथर्वणो वामश्वस्य शीर्ष्णा प्र यदीमुवाच।। *Ibid.,I.116.12*

Vak

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The Vedic seer takes so comprehensive a view of *Vāk* that it is rather unjust to translate it by speech, language or any other kindred word available in English. Instead of being confined to the communicative medium amongst humans, it extends to the voice and sound produced by animals, birds, insects and inorganic objects such as the slab of stone used in extracting *Soma* juice from the creeper. For instance, there is a complete hymn seen by seer *Arbuda Kādraveya* in which he invites people of his sort to enter into conversation with the slab of stone pressing *Soma* for *Indra* and other gods. He observes:

"*Let the slabs of stone speak out loudly and let we people speak out aloud; let we both speaking speak to one another. When the pieces of the mountain meet together quickly bathed in Soma and make uproar, let us produce sacred words in the praise of Indra.*"[1]

Continuing further he points out:

"*These slabs of stone are speaking with their mouths rendered greenish like hundred and rather thousand persons crying together.*"[2]

They are compared to swans sending their sonorous voice up in the sky.[3]

It goes without saying that to the ordinary ear any sound produced by any inert object is no language at all bearing any intelligent message. But to the highly sensitised ear of the seer, charged with higher consciousness, even the sound produced by the slab of stone used in pressing *Soma* juice, is a sort of *Vāk* with a distinct message communicated through it and in this respect no less sacred, defined and clear than the words of the seer himself. Obviously from the viewpoint of the seer, *Vāk*, instead of having its origin solely in the vocal organ of the humans, has its roots extended in the whole of nature including the absolutely inert objects and spheres in it. Nature in any case has all sorts of messages to communicate through a variety of ways which all together can be characterised as *Vāk*, particularly of the extraordinary sort as

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1 प्रैते वदन्तु प्र वयं वदाम ग्रावभ्यो वाचं वदता वदद्भ्यः।
यदद्रयः पर्वताः साकमाशवः श्लोकं घोषं भरथेन्द्राय सोमिनः।। *RV.X.94.1*

2 एते वदन्ति शतवत् सहस्रवदभि क्रन्दन्ति हरितेभिरासभिः। *Ibid.,X.94.2*

3 सुपर्णा वाचमक्रतोप द्यवि। *Ibid., X.94.5*

embedded the Veda. Seers have received that *Vāk* directly from nature as indwelt by the Divine. The vocal organ of the humans, along with the apparatus of the brain behind it, is a specialised formulation out of the basic communicative and receptive stuff underlying nature. radual purification of the *Vāk* by this organ and the apparatus behind it is also a part of the nature of things and by no means anything absolutely above nature. The message of the Divine which lies instilled in nature has eventually to be brought to the notice of the Divine, like the *Soma* juice instilled in the creeper and squeezed out of it so as to be offered to the Divine. The slab of stone is a medium of both, the communication and the squeezing. If it makes the *Soma* juice available to the Divine on the one hand, it, on the other, also communicates its feeling of devotion to the Divine through its sound, having, therefore, all the potentiality of distinct words implicit in it. This may look ridiculous to the rational mind taking things in exclusion, but, to the gestalt of the seer, it is as much real as his perception in any other field of life. To him, the slab of stone is a symbol of the communicative potentiality embedded in nature needing, however, the human hearing and vocal organs and the brain working behind them to go on refining it further so as to make that message worded as distinctly as possible.

Kindred is the case with the conversation between *Viśvāmitra* and the two rivers, *Vipāśā* and *Śutudrī*. *Viśvāmitra* asks the rivers to lower down their flow so that he, along with his royal retinue, may get passage across them. They, at the first instance, show their disagreement to his proposal as it was against the dispensation of *Indra* who had created their bed to take the Himalayan water to the sea. On his request being made repeatedly to them, however, they concede to it somehow, but warn him not to forget their words and instead preserve them properly for being pronounced in the coming ages so as to serve as an imperative upon people not to disturb the course of nature, particularly the flow of rivers lest it might be disruptive of the course of life of the humans themselves.[4] The prophetic significance of the words of the rivers is more than evident today with the human hand deployed indiscreetly in stopping the natural flow of very many rivers in India at least and reaping its disastrous consequences. It is significant to note that the rivers characterise what they communicated to the seer as *vacah*, the plural form of *Vāk*. Obviously, it is difficult to imagine how the rivers might have been articulate to the seer so as to describe the medium of communication

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4 एतद् वचो जरितुर्मापि मृष्ठा आ यत् ते घोषानुत्तरा युगानि।
उक्थेषु कारो प्रति नो जुषस्व मा नो नि कः पुरुषत्रा नमस्ते।। *Ibid., III.33.8*

used by them as *Vāk*. Yet, if the seer listens to it as such anyway, he cannot be dispensed with outright as anything but realistic, since, whatever he heard in the voice of the rivers has already proved a hard fact today.

Vāk, after all, is a wave emerging from consciousness and assuming the form of sound due to friction generated by the vibration. The vibration, in its turn, is caused by the principle of delight, underlying the consciousness, both in the state of acceleration and impediment. In other words, when the principle of delight implicit in the consciousness gets accelerated or impeded, it generates in it some sort of vibration which on getting some sort of friction at any point, gets transformed into sound, voice or word and comes to be given the generic name *Vāk*. This is borne out by one of the mantras seen by *Pratardana* in which it has been stated that *Soma* has created the vibration of words like the sea the wave over it; it is this vibration which assumes the form of mantras as seen by the seers. Having seen the lower points of the enclosure, the seer continues, *Soma* as bull enters amongst cows, having cognised them as such.[5] *Soma* is the principle of delight inherent in existence and consciousness. It is the source of the wave of *Vāk* and its vibration. The wave of the ocean symbolises its mode of manifestation as well as its universality. Vibrating as such, the wave of the *Soma* of delight becomes the source of the word like the bull finding out the lower points in the enclosure of cows and entering into it with his roaring voice. The enclosure is the impediment in the way of the bull symbolising the source of *Vāk*. It is through his cognisance of the lower points in the enclosure that the bull is able to enter amongst the cows and generate *Vāk* through the medium of those cows. Thus there is a veritable correspondence between the wave of the ocean and the creative emotion of the bull. Both of them bypass the impediments coming in their respective ways and generate their respective sounds symbolising *Vāk*. This point gets further elaborated by a vision of seer *Asita* in which he observes that *Soma* creates the vibration of *Vāk* on the high tide of the ocean stimulating the vase dropping the honey.[6] In this vision, *Soma* as the principle of delight is said to have generated *Vāk* on the high tide of the sea suggesting thereby that *Vāk* has its origin in the principle of delight while its field of manifestation is as

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5 प्रावीविपद्वाच ऊर्मिं न सिन्धुर्गिरःसोमः पवमानो मनीषाः।
अन्तः पश्यन् वृजनेमारणया तिष्ठति वृषभो गोषु जानन्।। *Ibid., IX.96.7*

6 प्र वाचमिन्दुरिष्यति समुद्रस्याधि विष्टपि।
जिन्वन् कोशं मधुश्चुतम्।। *Ibid.,IX.12.6*

universal and irresistibly powerful as the wave of the ocean. Just as the wave of the ocean generates sound, even so the principle of delight, no matter impeded or accelerated, gives birth to *Vāk*. This *Vāk* itself is the vase of mead letting its content symbolising delight get spilled over its field of manifestation. It is on some such line that seer *Devāpi* prays to *Brhaspati* to put such a *Vāk* in his mouth which be brilliant, vigorous and free defects and by means of which he may make the rain fall on *Śāntanu* so that the mead-rich drop of heaven may get entry into him.[7] The brilliant *Vāk* which seer prays to *Brhaspati*, the god of *Vāk*, to put in his mouth by means of which he intends to bring rain to *Śāntanu* is by no means the prayer of rain nor is the rain intended to be brought down from the higher sea to the lower one, as has been observed in the fifth mantra of the hymn, simply the rain of the water.[8] Rain dropped from the higher sea to the lower one is of no use at all. It is useful only when it is shed on the parched land. This anomaly can be removed only under the supposition that the higher sea is the sea of higher consciousness while the lower one is the sea of the ordinary human consciousness. The rain of the brilliant *Vāk* is the descent of the delight of the higher consciousness to the parched soil of the human consciousness so that the latter may get inspired, energised and fed with the words of delight. Thus, we see how the spectacles of higher and lower sea, wave and tide, vase and drop of mead on the one hand and those of bull, enclosure and cow on the other all have been addressed from time to time by seers to symbolise the phenomenon of descent of the delight of higher consciousness to the ambit of the human consciousness and the vocal organ in the form of the sacred *Vāk*. It is in keeping with this tradition set by this kind of vision coming to seers that the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* subsequently equates *Vāk* with the sea and gives the rationale of this equation in terms of imperishability of *Vāk* and sea both in common.[9] The imperishability of the sea obviously is owing to its depth as well as extensiveness. So must be the case with *Vāk*. If the depth of the sea touches the rock-bottom of the earth, the depth of *Vāk* must touch the rock-bottom of the Reality extending from the inert to the superconscient in all their universality.

In regard to the universality of *Vāk*, the seer takes cognisance, besides the sound produced by the slab of the stone, etc., discussed above, of the musical form of *Vāk* implicit in different musical instruments such as

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7 अस्मे धेहि द्युमतीं वाचमासन् बृहस्पते अनमीवामिषिताम्।
यया वृष्टिं शंतनवे वनाव दिवो ऽदप्सो मधुमाँ आ विवेश।। *Ibid.,X.98.3*

8 स उत्तरस्मादधरं समुद्रमपो दिव्या असृजद् वर्ष्या अभि। *Ibid.,X.98.5*

9 वाग्वै समुद्रः। न वै वाक् क्षीयते न समुद्रः क्षीयते। *Ait.Brah.V.16*

lute, *dundubhī, akṣa* and *tūṇava*. Though obviously inert, these instruments are capable of producing the best possible form of meaningful sound. They are most articulate and sonorous. Their sound is characterised by the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* as something divine and yet to have been put into them by the vegetations.[10] If the cadence of music superhuman in quality were not already implicit in the vegetational stuff these instruments are made of, it could not be produced out of them in any case. No matter the human hand and the vocal organ are also involved in the production of these musical notes, the actual note is produced by the respective instruments themselves. It, thus, bears out the implicit presence of these notes in them.

A very pertinent instance of the seer's awareness of the implicit presence of *Vāk* in nature, particularly the living, is the *Frog Hymn* of the *Ṛgveda* seen by *Vasistha*. The seer is fully aware of the fact how the frog lies silently under the ground throughout the year like a dry piece of animal's hide used in fetching water. However, when the rain comes down from the heaven, the seer observes, the frogs get swelled and begin to produce sound of various sorts like cows lowing for their calves.[11] The croaking sound produced by them has been characterised by the seer as a sort of *Vāk*, *vagnu*, and has been compared to that of a child talking fondly to his father understandably after remaining away from him quite for some time or to that of a number of students of the Veda having undergone a certain course of austerity and reciting thereafter the sacred text.[12] This, of course, is a rare account of the method following which the Vedic study was prosecuted at that early stage when mantras were still under the process of being seen. That the sacredness was imputed to them not at any later stage but was associated with them from the very beginning and that, therefore, they were to be learnt and recited after going through a definite course of austerity, is evident from the account of the Vedic students adduced as a simile to that of frogs keeping silent for almost a year and then coming up and producing their peculiar sound together with utmost fondness. This is further evident from the description of frogs

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10 तां वनस्पतयश्चतुर्धा वाचं विन्यदधुर्दुन्दुभौ वीणायामक्षे तूणवे। तस्मादेषा
वदिष्ठैषा वल्गुतमा वाग्या वनस्पतीनां देवानां ह्येषा वागासीत्। *Tan.Brah.VI.5.13*

11 दिव्या आपो अभि यदेनमायन् दृतिं न शुष्कं सरसी शयानम्।
गवामह न मायुर्वत्सिनीनां मण्डूकानां वग्नुरत्रा समेति।। *RV.VII.103.2*

12 अक्खलीकृत्या पितरं न पुत्रो अन्यो अन्यमुप वदन्तमेति।
संवत्सरं शशयाना ब्राह्मणा व्रतचारिणः *Ibid., VII.103.3*
वाचं पर्जन्यजिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका अवादिषुः।। *Ibid., VII.103.1*

as Brahmins who are well drunk in Soma and are composing mantras to be used in year-long sacrifices as also as the *Adhvaryu* priests heating the vessel of milk called *gharma*, and sweating after coming to the public view from their secret dwellings.[13] From these details it is evident that the Vedic mantras were being seen and composed on the one hand, and were being used in sacred sacrificial performances on the other besides being learnt by students only after undergoing a definite course of austerity, all these three functions being carried out almost concurrently.

This vital information, however, is elicited here in the hymn only by way of simile to what happened with the frogs. They form the main subject matter of the hymn and as such are supposed to speak through their croaking sound something highly charged with filial and motherly love or repeat the sacred words taught by the inspired teacher, as it were. By seeing them as such, the seer evinces his penetrating perception of the roots of even so specific functions as seeing and composing of sacred mantras, recitation of them on sacrificial occasions and learning them through effort in the subhuman world itself. There is love, both filial and motherly on that plane, as also observance of austerity and learning of lesson's from the superiors with utmost puncteliousness and, at the top of all this, use of a kind of language peculiar to that plane of development of life and yet pregnant with all the future possibilities compressed in it. That language is indeed *Vāk* which may be treated as the mother of all languages, voices, sounds and indications given through the vocal organ, no matter clearly developed or remaining implicit. *Vāk* is the language of nature ingrained in it by *Ṛta*, the principle of universal dynamics and hence the most primeval teacher. Everything in nature, including the humans, acts under the imperative of *Ṛta*, operating in different cycles, including the yearly and the seasonal. It is under the operation of such an imperative that, the seer observes, the frogs lying in hibernation almost for a year, like dry pieces of animal's hide, come to the surface in different colours and full of vitality and vigour as well as emotions of love of all varieties and imbued with a variety of *Vāk* as important for them as is the Vedic mantra for the human beings, as it serves as the word of liberation for them from their highly repressive state of hibernation.[14] Hereby the seer suggests that just as the frog attains to liberation from his state of

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13 ब्राह्मणासो सोमिनो वाचमक्रत ब्रह्म कृण्वन्तः परिवत्सरीणम्।
अध्वर्यवो घर्मिणः सिष्विदाना आविर्भवन्ति गुह्या न केचित्।। *Ibid., VII.103.8*

14 देवहितिं जुगुपुर्द्वादशस्य क्रतुं नरो न प्र मिनन्त्येते।
संवत्सरे प्रावृष्यागतायां तप्ता घर्मा अश्नुवते विसर्गम्।। *Ibid., VII.103.9*

repression at the advent of the rainy season, even so at the advent of the proper time of intellectual and spiritual fulfilment humans are sure to attain to liberation through the words of the Veda. This significant message is evident in the concluding mantra of the hymn in which the seer prays to frogs as follows:

"*Frogs bellowing like cows as well as those bleating like goats besides the variegated and the green have granted to us fulfilment of our wishes; now giving us cows in hundreds, may they extend the span of our life for the attainment of a thousand.*"[15]

The question is how can frogs be expected to make available to the seer cows in hundreds and thousands so that he may have fulfilment of his life? The real burden of the hymn is not cow or anything else of the sort but *Vāk* seen and composed by seers, transmitted to the student by the teacher, as learnt by the former only after undergoing a certain course of austerity, recited on the occasion of performance of sacrifices and serving as a means of liberation of mankind. This being the real crux of ideas underlying the hymn, where is any scope for the acquisition of cows and that also in hundreds and thousands through prayers offered to frogs who in themselves have just managed to survive the state of extreme repression for about a year? If there is anything referent to cow in this context that is only the word *gomāyu*, bellowing of the cow used in the last mantra for a sort of sound produced by frogs. Is it by virtue of croaking like the bellowing of cows that frogs are capable of granting cows in hundreds and thousands to the seer? That obviously is a funny expectation. As a matter of fact, the real burden of the hymn being *Vāk* and cow being a veritable symbol of *Vāk* in the Veda, as has already been shown while discussing the symbolism of cow, it is but proper to treat the cows of this context also as symbolical of *Vāk* of a certain variety which the seer craves for.

We need only to draw our attention to a particular mantra seen by *Dirghatamas* in which there is an account of a cow creating waters through her dexterity and in that course taking one step, two steps, four steps, eight steps, nine steps and intending to expand into the thousand-syllabled in the highest heaven.[16] In this mantra obviously the cow having

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15 गोमायुरदादजमायुरदात् पृश्निरदाद्धरितो नो वसूनि।
गवां मण्डूका ददतः शतानि सहस्रसावे प्र तिरन्त आयुः।। *Ibid., VII.103.10*

16 गौरी मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन्।। *Ibid., I.164.41*

crossed the ninth step explodes into the thousand-syllabled *Vāk*. Similarly, in the mantra under consideration the cow is cow insofar as she stands a comparison to the frog in regard to her bellowing voice. As soon as she is contemplated in hundreds and thousands, however, she outgrows her actuality and turns into an usual symbol of *Vāk* in the achievement of which the seer visualises the real fulfilment of his life. Just as the frog by virtue of emerging out of the extremely repressive state of hibernation, reaches the liberated state of producing the bellowing voice of the cow, even so the seer on behalf of the humanity craves to emerge out of the repressive state of the human intellection and expression and to place himself in the state of spiritual abundance and self-expression symbolised by cow in thousands or indeed the thousand-syllabled *Vāk*. While the frog in hibernation is symbolical of the aspirant of the *Vāk* undergoing the course of self-purgation and purification so as to be able to learn and understand the Vedic *Vāk*, as this hymn contends, the same frog after getting itself bathed in and filled with the heavenly water and producing the bellowing voice of cow stands for the full-fledged seer having realised the thousand-syllabled *Vāk* and thus being in a position to make available the same to other human beings also. He becomes, as it were, the powerful leader of the Vedic *Vāk*, as one of the mantras in the hymn states, who transmits his secret knowledge to the student in such a manner that the latter gets not only fulfilled mentally and spiritually but also transformed bodily like the frog getting all the joints or limbs of its body straightened, opened out, expanded and enriched with nourishment after coming to the surface and entering into collective croaking sessions.[17]

The symbolism of the two states of the frog, that is, the states of hibernation and resurgence, can still better be understood in the light of what another seer *Dirghatamas* has observed significantly enough in regard to two kindred states in his own life. In the mantra concerned, he observes that at the earlier stage he did not know what he himself was and moved almost namelessly in complete isolation only with his mind yoked to his body like the horse to the cart. It was only when the first products of *Ṛta* came to him, he points out, that he could attain to the share of the *Vāk* he is supposed to have seen.[18] Obviously *Dirghatamas'*

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17 यदेषामन्यो अन्यस्य वाचं शाक्तस्येव वदति शिक्षमाणः।
सर्वं तदेषां समृधेव पर्व यत् सुवाचो वदथनाध्यप्सु।। *bid., VII.103.5*

18 न वि जानामि यदिवेदमस्मि निण्यः सन्नद्धो मनसा चरामि।
युदा मागन् प्रथमजा ऋतस्यादिद् वाचो अश्नुवे भागमस्याः।। *Ibid., I.164.37*

state of isolation and namelessness is cognate to the frog's state of hibernation, while that of his infusion with *Vāk* by the first products of *Ṛta* is parallel to the frog's state of getting the water of the heaven and becoming so charged with vitality and emotion as to enter into sessions of croaking and produce sound like the student of the Veda reciting mantras after getting them transmitted to him by a powerful teacher. In both the cases, the state of penury is followed by the state of abundance through something coming from above, physically in the case of the frog and spirituality in the case of the seer.

It is interesting to note that this hymn has been characterised by Max Muller as a satire on priests.[19] Needless to point out that it is the so-called priests who are responsible for the preservation of the Vedic texts, including this hymn. Satire is a criticism of the folly or vice ridiculing the person concerned. Now, had it been a satire on the priests, would it have been possible for the ridiculed priests themselves to have preserved it particularly to the detriment of their own profession? They would by no means have memorised it and kept passing it from generation to generation for millennia before it could be committed to writing particularly when it amounted to passing as harsh a stricture on them as to compare them with frogs in regard to composition, recitation and application of the Vedic mantras in sacrifices. In spite of such an adverse comparison being involved in the hymn, if they composed such a hymn at all and kept it preserved no less puncteliously and diligently than any other hymn, it testifies to the proposition that the basic intention behind the composition of this hymn must by no means have been denunciation of himself by the seer concerned. If he happens to compare the seers and students of the Veda with such a lowly creature as the frog, he must have intended to bring out through this comparison a certain specific point which could not be expressed in any other way at least at that moment. That specific point obviously is the state of long hibernation the frog has to pass before it gets obliged by the rainy season and consequently becomes so much puffed up and articulate. The seer finds this point so highly relevant to kindred states of seers and students of the Veda that he could not refrain from making use of it in his creative way so as to make it reflect the state of life of the seers getting to have mighty visions as well as that of the students of the Veda getting initiated so arduously in this secret lore and preserving it so assiduously. To him, the hibernating frog is symbolical of the *tapasvin* who by means of his passage through extreme hardship and self-negation reaches the unique state of spiritual

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19 *Max Muller, Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p.494.*

opulence resulting in the sense of liberation and seeing of mantras. It provides the seer with the best possible analogy to the way of life of the Vedic seers practising severe austerity for decades before the dawn of mantras on them, as the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* states.[20] The frog's croaking in response to one another's is likewise analogous to similar pattern of behaviour of the learner of Vedic mantras from the teacher after getting through the difficult days of initiation.

Interspersing of the symbolic content with what is intended to be symbolised in this hymn has, however, been done in such a natural way that the reader at the first sight is most likely to mistake it as a panegyric of the frogs presenting a mockery of the way of life of the seer and the student of the Veda. Not to talk of *Max Muller* and others, who after all came to the Veda from an entirely foreign milieu, even *Sāyaṇa*, notwithstanding his head to toe immersion in the Vedic tradition, stands beguiled in understanding the real thrust of meaning of the hymn inasmuch as he mistakes it as meant for recitation by those intending to have rainfall. Strangely enough, this interpretation of *Sāyaṇa's* is rooted as far back as *Ṛgvedānukrāmani* of *Kātyāyana* dating in B.C. Even *Yāska* takes this hymn as a sheer prayer to frogs which felt gladdened on getting rain which fell as a result of seer *Vasistha's* prayer to *Parjanya*, the god of rain. Now, if this were the case, the hymn would involve elevation of the status of frogs by comparing their behaviour with that of seers and students of the Veda rather than satiric denunciation of the role of the latter. This obviously accords much more with the spirit of the hymn than the viewpoint taken by *Max Muller*. In this capacity, it may, to some extent, serve the purpose as a prayer for rainfall as contended by *Kātyāyana* and approved of by *Sāyaṇa*. But this is only a secondary meaning of the hymn useful for the laity, and in any case not contrary to the sense intended to be brought home by the seer. It may, therefore, be characterised as what *Yāska* calls the *adhidaivika* sense of the Veda. From this standpoint, the interpretation proposed by us would be worth characterising as the *adhyatmika*, spiritual, which really is the crux of the meaning of the Veda from *Yāska's* viewpoint also. Access to this core of the meaning requires decoding of symbolic terms used in the hymn and gleaning out the secret sense intended to be communicated through them rather than remaining deluded by the gross literal sense of them, as has been the case with *Yāska*, *Kātyāyana* and *Sāyaṇa* due to *Yāska* being engrossed primarily in the task of derivation of words and the latter two in

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20 तद्यदेनांस्तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्मस्वयम्भ्वभ्यानर्षत् तदृषीणां ऋषित्वमिति ह विज्ञायते। *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka II.9*

the task of finding out the sacrificial use of the mantras concerned. As distinct from them, the outlook proposed here is meant for going to the root of the meaning intended to be communicated by the seer himself.

The pertinent point necessitating the symbolic interpretation is in the first place the continuity of reference to *Vāk* of the Vedic variety throughout the whole hymn beginning from first to the tenth mantra sometimes expressly and at others allegorically. Had it been simply a prayer meant for bringing rain, it ought to have been addressed better to *Parjanya*, the proper god of rain. Resurrection of the frog is only a result of the rainfall and not anyway cause of it. Vedic association of the *Vāk* has been maintained throughout by continuous reference to *Brāhmaṇas*, their practice of austerity and emergence from the state of silence to opulence of *Vāk*, learning of the student from the worthy teacher, getting even physically transformed on receiving the *Vāk*, reciting mantras, having learnt them from one another, using *Vāk* in year-long sacrifices, taking *Soma* and reciting mantras, heating the vessel of milk in the sacrificial context, getting liberated and having the promise of getting granted to him *Vāk* in hundreds and thousands which is the final objective of the Vedic seer. Thus the account of frogs, along with that of their croaking voice, continues to reflect the mode of living, austerity, gift of *Vāk* from the side of the Divine, performance of sacrifice and attainment of liberation by the seer and the student of the Veda. When the scenario of life of frog is reflective, so persistently and continuously, of the secret of the sacred *Vāk* as well as of the process of its acquisition and preservation, obviously it rather than the role of the frog is to be taken as the real meaning intended by the seer to be communicated *via* allusion to the pattern of behaviour of the frog as the bearer of the meaning on account of its reflective appropriateness. Any Vedic seer, much less one of the eminence of *Vasiṣṭha*, is expected not to waste his time, energy and genius as well as the inestimable quantum of attention of the posterity in devising a panegyric to a petty creature like the frog but to make it a medium of communication of something precious which he has acquired through his *tapas*. By virtue of reflecting that precious acquisition of the seer, the scenario of life of the frog is, thus, to be taken as nothing less than being symbolical of the same acquisition.

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If frog symbolises the course of extreme *tapas* undertaken as a pre-condition of acquisition, transmission and reception of the sacred *Vāk*, cow represents its opulence and quality of nourishment as well as spontaneity of availability at a certain stage of spiritual elevation. Not to talk of her udders yielding milk in abundance, even her steps bespeak of the progress of *Vāk* from the monosyllabic state to the state of inestimable abundance. The child evidently begins its learning of language with the cognisance and identification of letters both consonants and vowels separately. At the next step, he it progresses to combine the consonants and the vowels into syllables. The syllables in their turn are learnt gradually in their coalescing into words in a considerable number. Then are learnt words in their formation of sentences comprising of small number of syllables such as six, seven, eight, etc. When this much is learnt, the learning of language of the child progresses by leaps and bounds like the learning of numerals after crossing the figure nine. Just as the latter jumps from ten to hundred, from hundred to thousand, from thousand to million, billion and trillion progressively and stops only at the infinity, even so the learning of language by the child after reaching formation of sentences has only boundlessness as its upper limit culminating in its boundless ideas seeking expression in boundless words. Since ideas are concerned with each and every sphere of life and the world, the words also, being intimately connected with them, have to be used in so much abundance. Letters, as indivisible units of language, thus, go on getting coalesced with one another and yielding words and words out of them like the creatrix of the universe, if conceived as a cow, yielding milk so profusely as to fill up the oceans and thereby provide subsistence of life to all universally.

This is what a prominent Vedic seer like *Dīrghatamas* has envisioned in his two consecutive mantras in the famous hymn known as *Aśya Vāmīya*. To translate the mantras:

"The cow has bellowed sculpting on the waters by means of her one step, two steps, four steps, eight steps, nine steps culminating ultimately in her wish to become thousand-syllabled in the highest heaven."

"It is owing to have derived out of her that the oceans rain down variously all over providing subsistence of life in all the four directions. This is how

the imperishable syllable assumes the form of the perishables providing subsistence of life to all."[1]

In this highly symbolic configuration of ideas and expressions, the details relating to cow and *Vāk* are so interspersed with each other that scholars generally have found it difficult to make any sense out of it. *Yāska*, for instance, while commenting on the second of these mantras, takes it to relate to the spectacle of cloud its raining down on the earth and providing nourishment to creatures living on the latter.[2] There is nothing in his commentary to indicate that this mantra has anything to do with the phenomenon of language or *Vāk*. Following faithfully in his footsteps, *Griffith* takes the word *gauri* in the sense of buffalo symbolising the rain cloud. So is the case with *Sāyaṇa* except for taking *gauri* in the right perspective of *Vāk*, having derived it rightly from the root *gr*, to utter or sing, but at the same time mistaking it for atmospheric sound produced by the cloud. He, however, in his commentary has referred to the viewpoint of certain unnamed interpreters who take *gauri* in the sense of *Vāk* representing what is called *śabda-brahman*, that is, the Ultimate Reality conceived as word. They take the one-footed in the sense of the most primeval sound *Om*, the two-footed in the sense of two grammatical categories of words, that is, the nominal and the verbal. By the four-footed they understand the four kinds of words, that is, the noun, the verb, the preposition and the conjunction. Similarly by the eight-footed, they mean a reference to eight varieties of case-endings, including the vocative. They understand the nine-footed as referring to the indeclinables in addition to the eight sorts of case-endings. Alternatively they relate the nine-footed to the nine places of articulation of words, such as the navel, the heart, the upper and lower parts of throat, the hard gum, the soft gum, the palate, the teeth and the lips. In *parame vyoman*, that is, the highest heaven, they understand a reference either to the pure heart or to the basal plexus, that is, the *mūlādhāra*. *Sāyaṇa*, however, takes this interpretation only casually and returns to the explanation offered by his teacher which takes the one-footed in the sense of the atmospheric, the two-footed in the sense of the atmospheric and the solar, the four-footed in the sense of

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1 गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्ष्त्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन्।
तस्याः समुद्रा अधि वि क्षरन्ति तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश्चतस्रः।
ततः क्षरत्यक्षरं तद् विश्वमुप जीवति।। *RV.I.164.41-42*

2 तस्याः समुद्राःअधिविक्षरन्ति। वर्षन्ति मेघाः। तेन जीवन्ति दिगाश्रयाणि भूतानि।
ततः क्षरति अक्षरम् उदकम्। तत् सर्वाणि भूतानि उपजीवन्ति। *Yāska, Nirukta XI.41*

that resounding in the four directions, the eight-footed in the sense of the same resounding in the sub-directions as well as the directions, the nine-footed in the sense of the last eight plus the solar and the thousand-syllabled in the sense of abundance of water shed in the horizon.

Thus we can understand the difficulty before *Sāyaṇa* in taking these mantras in the right perspective notwithstanding his hitting upon *gauri* rightly to refer to *Vāk* and taking cognisance of the worthwhile interpretation of certain scholars left unnamed. Once his teacher had explained particularly the first of these two mantras in the sense of the spectacle of cloud and rain, he, in all his faithfulness to the former, seems to have considered it blasphemous to explain it otherwise, in spite of all the possibilities opened out before him.

In this configuration of ideas relating to cloud and rain on the one side and cow and her milk on the other, what is contextual and what, as distinct from it, is elucidative, can veritably be decided by taking into consideration the context of these mantras formed by those preceding and following them. As regards a couple of mantras immediately preceding them, the first one of them relates to the real essence of the mantras which is said to lie in the highest heaven along with all the gods dwelling there together as also to the imperative that one who does not understand this secret, cannot derive anything worthwhile out of the mantras while one who understands it properly, gets his position reserved amongst gods.[3] Naturally it means to suggest very close relationship between the most refined *Vāk*, in the form of the mantra, and the higher grade of reality as is represented by the divinities. In the psychology of our mind itself, the deeper we go, the closer we find our language in its relationship with our ideas intended to be expressed. At the deepest level, indeed, it is difficult to imagine if what we think has any trace of linguistic form at all. It is only when we move to the exterior of our mental being that the relationship between the language and the reality gets gradually slackened leading to a variety of linguistic forms being used for the expression of one and the same idea. This arbitrariness in the relationship is symptomatic of the language falling apart from the reality. This is what the mantra under consideration means to suggest. The real understanding of any mantra lies in visualising the divinity underlying

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3 ऋचो अक्षरै परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः।
यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत् तद्विदुस्त इमे समासते।। *RV.I.164.39*

its words. That obviously is possible by entering into the deeper stratum of our psychic being. It is amounting to this deeper penetration that the *Yoga Sūtra* points out how one can come into actual contact of the deity through study of the Veda from the core of one's being.[4]

It is the *Vāk* of this deeper stratum of our inner being lying in coincidence with the actual reality, which forms the subject matter of the second one of these two mantras. Here that *Vāk* has been symbolised by a cow having plenty of fodder at her disposal and thus living in a state of plenitude of food, pure water and autonomy of free movement at her sweet will.[5] Being symbolic of the *Vāk* on that inmost or primeval stratum of being, the plenitude of the fodder at the disposal of the cow is the immensity of the untrapped reality which she has to consume and turn into milk with the aid of the water of cognisance so that the same may be available in abundance to the seer, establish him profoundly in his wisdom and thus make him realise that he has been given to share suitably in the wealth of the *Vāk*, just as *Dirghatamas* had after those born first of *Ṛta* dawned on him.

Placed, as it is, immediately after these two mantras referring explicitly to the cow of *Vāk*, the basic mantra under consideration may naturally be expected to do something intimately with *Vāk* in furtherance of the ideas expressed already rather than to hop with cloud and rain. The water she treads upon placing her one step, two steps, four steps, eight steps, nine steps, and eventually culminating in the thousand-syllabled *Vāk* in the highest heaven is the consciousness ranging from the most elementary to the most profound bearing on it the imprint of learning from the beginning to the end. It is the same as the cow of *Vāk* of the preceding mantra which is implored upon to drink and turn it into her milk, obviously with the aid of the fodder of the reality impinging on that consciousness.

Thus three things stand out prominently in this symbolism. In the first place, there is the cow symbolising *Vāk*. In the second place, there is the water on which she takes her steps as well as out of which she is implored upon to drink. This water stands for the consciousness on which *Vāk* moves and through which she consumes her food. Thirdly, there is

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4 स्वाध्यादिष्टदेवतासम्प्रयोगः। *Patañjali, Yoga Sūtra II.44*

5 सूयवसाद् भगवती हि भूया अथो वयं भगवन्तः स्याम।
अद्धि तृणमघ्न्ये विश्वदानीं पिब शुद्धमुदकमाचरन्ती।। *RV.I.164.40*

the fodder representing the reality as such, which *Vāk* consumes through the help of consciousness and turns into something digestible and nourishing to the seer. This stuff is symbolised by the milk of the cow of *Vāk*, which the seer aspires to get in abundance.

If the mantras preceding it, as well as it by itself speak of *Vāk* in her different grades and functions through the symbol of cow, those succeeding it immediately concern themselves with the reality itself which forms the source of the fodder the cow of *Vāk* is supposed to feed herself on and reproduce in the form of her milk. In the first one of these mantras that Ultimate Reality has been conceived as a bull being roasted in the fire produced by his own excreta and giving rise to all the principles of existence.[6] The second one talks of three prominent forces emerging out of the operation of those principles of existence. These are the sun, the air and the fire.

From amongst the two mantras, which follow them immediately, while the first one talks purely of *Vāk*, the second one concerns itself purely with the reality in a most categorical and explicit manner. The first one of these is that famous mantra which conceives of *Vāk* as having taken four steps, three of which are hidden in mystery while it is only the fourth one which is used by men in their common parlance.[7] While the fourth step of the *Vāk* is known to everyone, it is only those having intimate knowledge of the reality who, the mantra observes, can know of the three secret steps of the *Vāk*. These secret steps can very well be identified with what subsequently came to be called as *Parā*, *Paśyantī* and *Madhyamā*. *Parā* is that most primeval form of *Vāk* where the latter coincides with the Reality itself. As distinct from it, the *Paśyantī Vāk* is called so on account of coming face to face with the Reality and being in direct awareness of it. *Madhyamā* is that step of *Vāk* which takes its stand on the crucial point where the latter assumes the form of ideas and begins to feel itself as dichotomous of the reality. The fourth step is the articulate form of *Vāk* where the latter remains only as a system of signs and symbols of the reality. This last phase of *Vāk* gets illustrated in the next mantra of the hymn stating how one and the same Reality happens to be named by

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6 शकमयं धूममारादपश्यं विषूवता पर एनावरेण।
उक्षाणं पृश्निमपचन्त वीरास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्। *Ibid.,I.164.43*

7 चत्वारि वाक्परिमिता पदानि तानि विदु ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति।। *Ibid.,I.164.45*

seers optionally as *Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Suparṇa, Yama, Mātariśvan,* etc.[8]

Thus the entire context of the mantra talking of various steps of *Vāk* culminating in the emergence of the thousand-syllabled shows beyond doubt that it has to do basically with the phenomenon of language in all possible forms and by no means with the spectacle of cloud and rain along with the directions, the sub-directions and the sun, as *Sāyaṇa* and his teacher explain it and Griffith and others approve of it through their translations and comments. It is sad to note that Vedic scholars like these, including even *Yāska*, could not take note of the cryptic and yet highly valuable comment of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* on this mantra stating that whatever has been stated in this mantra concerns *Vāk* by way of its specification.[9] Even the *Ṛgveda* itself in one of the mantras seen by *Kurusuti* speaks of *Vāk* as consisting of eight steps and nine edges and coming in touch with *Ṛta* itself. While the *aṣṭapadī* and *navapadī* of this mantra are precisely the same as the *aṣṭapadī* and *navapadī* of the mantra under consideration, the *ṛtaspṛśam* of this mantra can very well be taken as coincident to the *sahasrākṣara* of the latter one. If the *sahasrākṣara* is the highest object of aspiration of the seer in *Dīrghatamas'* mantra, this *aṣṭapadī Vāk* is considered by *Kurusuti* as formative of his sagacious personality.[10] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also confirms the point by stating that the thousand-syllabled cow is indeed *Vāk* itself, being uniformly one in its primeval state and giving rise to thousands out of it subsequently.[11]

If seer *Dīrghatamas*, thus, symbolises *Vāk* by cow in so covert a manner as to make it difficult even for accomplished scholars of the Veda to make out the sense, there are very many other seers who in their certain mantras have put cow and *Vāk* in such an explicit manner that there is left no scope at all for any misunderstanding of the symbolism. For instance, there are two contiguous mantras seen by *Nema Bhārgava* in which *Vāk* has expressly been conceived as a cow. In the first one of these

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8 इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गुरुत्मान्।
एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः।। *Ibid., I.164.46*

9 इति वाचो विशेषणम्। *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka I.94*

10 वाचमष्टपदीमहं नवस्रक्तिमृतस्पृशम्।
इन्द्रात् परि तन्वं ममे।। *RV. VIII. 76.12*

11 वाग्वा एषा निदानेन यत्साहस्री। तस्या एतत् सहस्रं वाचः प्रजातं पूर्वा हैषैति पश्चादेनां प्रजातम्। *Sat.Brah.IV.5.8.4*

mantras, it has been stated that *Vāk* used even by inconscient entities is of universal order taking within its ambit even gods. It is the source of delight to all universally as it lies at the root of existence of all. It is a cow yielding energy as well as milk. Where the last resort of this cow is, is a mystery of the highest order.[12] In the next mantra, it has been described as a goddess and is said to have been made manifest by gods and as being used by animals of all varieties. Further in the second part of the mantra again it has been referred to as a delightful cow yielding all whatever is wished for, including energy, and is desired by the seer to come to him and persons like him when invoked properly.[13]

Obviously these mantras present a view of *Vāk* of the utmost comprehensive sort. It is conceived as having its origin in a state of things lying beyond the range of human understanding. As such, even gods have not created it but have only made it manifest. It is visualised not in any linguistic form but in an archetypal form constituting the source of all languages and sub-linguistic modes of expression used not only by all living beings but by inconscient beings even. Thus it is supposed to be in use of gods on the one hand and that of inconscient beings on the other. It is the language of the wind, of the waves of the sea, of the sound produced by the leaves of trees, sprouting of plants, opening of buds, buzzing of bees, chirping of birds, bellowing of bulls, crying of children, as well as that of the discursive intellectual and the prayerful devotee. It gives the delight of self-expression emerging out of the sense of self-existence. Just as the calf lives on the milk of its mother, even so the whole world lives on the power of self-expression imparted by *Vāk*. In this way, it has been conceived by the seer as a cow filled with the milk of delight which serves as the basis of our subsistence on all planes of existence.

There is another couple of mantras seen by *Jamadagni* in which the same all-pervading *Vāk* has been regarded as the mother of the *Rudras*, daughter of the *Vasus* and sister of the *Ādityas*. It is also characterised as the source of immortality. In keeping with this view of it, it has also been described as *Aditi*, the mother of all gods including the *Ādityas*, the *Rudras* and the *Vasus*. In fact, reference to her as the daughter of the

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12 यद् वाग्वदन्त्यविचेतनानि राष्ट्री देवानां निषसाद मन्द्रा।
चतस्र ऊर्जं दुदुहे पयांसि क्व स्विदस्याः परमं जगाम। *Ibid., VIII.100.10*

13 देवीं वाचमजनयन्त देवास्तां विश्वरूपाः पशवो वदन्ति।
सा नो मन्द्रेषमूर्जं दुहाना धेनुर्वागुस्मानुप सुष्टुतैतु।। *Ibid., VIII.10.11*

Vasus and sister of the *Ādityas* in the first half of the mantra, in contradiction to her being regarded as the mother of them as well as of the *Rudras* in the second half of it, is just stylistic intended for variation expression. Otherwise, she is the mother of all the gods without any exclusion. This *Aditi* of *Vāk* in the same continuation has been described as the cow which knowledgeable persons are implored upon not to kill at all, particularly as she is absolutely rid of sin and fault of all kinds.[14]

In the second mantra, the character of the *Vāk*, as such, has been made still clearer. Here it is said to stimulate the use of language within those who understand the value of language as well as to have contained in it all possible wisdom. She is also said to have descended from the gods as well as to be a goddess by herself. At last it is implored upon mankind not to kill this cow out of dearth of understanding.[15]

These details delivered to us by *Jamadagni* of the family of *Bhārgava* are sufficient to bear out how the seer was aware of the inestimable range of *Vāk* standing for the most fundamental as well as the manifest form of language of all varieties divine, human, sub-human and inconscient and as the bearer of all wisdom. In view of the uniformity of it on all these levels in fundamentals, he, instead of taking it as the cumulative result of the process of gradual growth, regards it as to have descended from the Divine and to have taken different forms at different planes of being. It is conceived as the mother of gods even, since they too are the result of the self-manifestation or expression of the Supreme Being. That way, it is the Creatrix of everything. This is what is meant by calling it as *Aditi*. *Aditi* takes the form of everything existing as well as possible and probable and yet at the same time she retains her sameness of being. This is the literal meaning of *Aditi* also. Being put at par with *Aditi*, *Vāk* also must be the same. It, in view of the seer, is *Aditi* herself considered from the viewpoint of the mode of self-expression. If self-expression of the Supreme Being results in the being of all, the means of self-expression He adopts must be the means of His creation or self-manifestation itself. This is the most fundamental form of *Vāk* conceivable and it is in this capacity that it is regarded as identical to *Aditi*, the mother of all gods, and as to contain in it all wisdom involved in the sustenance and future possibilities of the universe. It is in this capacity also that it is envisioned to have

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14 मा॒ता रु॒द्राणां दुहि॒ता वसू॑नां॒ स्वसा॑दि॒त्याना॑ममृत॒स्य॒ नाभिः॑।
प्र नु वो॑चं चिकि॒तुषे॒ जना॑य मा गामना॒गामदि॑तिं॒ वधि॑ष्ट।। *Ibid., VIII.101.15*

15 वचो॒विदं॒ वाच॑मु॒दीर॑यन्ती॒ विश्वा॑भि॒र्धीभि॒रुप॑तिष्ठमानाम्।
दे॒वीं दे॒वेभ्यः॑ पर्येयु॒षीं गामा मा॑ वृक्त॒ मर्त्यो॑ दु॒भचे॑ताः।। *Ibid., VIII.101.16*

descended from the Divine and to have assumed innumerably diverse forms in the world.

Vāk of this order has been symbolised by the seer by means of cow. The basis of the symbolisation as deducible from these mantras as well as from others discussed already, is the cow's power of procreation, capacity to yield sweet and nourishing milk, innocence, power of understanding and convenient communicability. All these qualities in any other single animal do not seem to obtain. So in the eye of the seer is the case of *Vāk*. There is no doubt about its power of growth. Emerging from the sound produced by contact among inanimate objects as well as from voices of animate being of innumerable varieties, it comes to the human level with inestimable possibility of growth and expansion out of, say, a few roots as is the case with Sanskrit, which in particular must have been there before the seer to speculate on. Besides this, it is through *Vāk* in any case that the learning of one generation passes to the other nourishing the latter throughout like the cow nourishing the body of those who take her milk. Cow is also considered to be one of the most intelligent and easily communicable animals. *Vāk*, on the other hand, is the most convenient and abundant means of communication besides serving as the chest of wisdom.

By symbolising *Vāk* through cow in these respects, the seer highlights the inviolability and necessity of taking utmost care in the preservation of *Vāk*. Cow is inviolable owing to being the mother of the calf growing into the bull and as such being immensely useful to the people as also owing to being considered as the second mother of the human child due to providing most nourishing foodstuff to it. Through the transference of the idea of inviolability of the cow, with all her tangible utility and loving appearance, to *Vāk*, the seer has created the imperative for that unique kind of protection of the *Vāk*, which we find operative in the preservation of the Vedic mantras representing *Vāk* at its best and with all its tangibility. In fact, when he asks mankind not to kill the cow of *Vāk* and condemns those who are inclined to kill it by characterising them as of cramped power of understanding, he provides us with the best clue to the interpretation of the Vedic legends relating to theft, concealment and recovery of cows by such agencies as *Vṛtra, Vala, Sambara, Pani,* etc., on the one side and *Indra, Saramā, Brhaspati, Aṅgiras* , etc., on the other, as has already been made out in this series.[16] Of course, the story of forcible

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16 *cf.*वाग्वै सरमा। *Ait.Brāh.II.40*

abduction of *Vasistha's* cow by *Viśvāmitra* in the capacity of the warring king as occurring subsequently in the *Ramayana,* may be considered as an allegorical representation of the concern of those dedicated to protection of the cow of *Vāk* in the form of the Veda and the wisdom embedded in it. So may be considered the basis of the idea of *Kamadhenu* and the stories relating to her.

Finally, when *Brahma* as a seer of the *Atharvaveda* describes the Veda as the mother while praying for the descent of the inspiration, relating to mantras addressed to *Soma,* upon the seers and benefaction of long span of life, vitality, progeny, cattle, glory, wealth and self-continence upon himself and then for the mantras to depart to the world of *Brahman,* he evinces his awareness of the symbolisation of *Vāk* by cow as an established fact by letting the latter be just indicated cryptically by the substitute mother, *mata,* instead of stating it by the proper word *go,* cow, as required.[17] Otherwise there is no justification for the Veda, masculine as it is in its grammatical form, to be addressed as the feminine *mata.* Such apparent anomalies are veritable indicators of the underlying symbolic image.

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17 स्तुता मया वरदा वेदमाता प्र चोदयन्तां पावमानी द्विजानाम्।
आयुः प्राणं प्रजां पशुं कीर्तिं द्रविणं ब्रह्मवर्चसम्।
मह्यं दत्वा व्रजत ब्रह्मलोकम्।।AV.XIX.71

III

We have already seen in the previous lecture how a parity has been seen in several mantras between *Aditi* and *Vāk* and how both in common get symbolised by cow. *Aditi* is the creatrix of the world from the ontological point of view while *Vāk* is so from the epistemic. For, tracing the diversity of the world back to the irreducible unity, the Vedic seer reaches *Aditi*, the undivided. It is through continuous division in her represented figuratively as her act of procreation that the diversity comes into being. That way, she serves as the basic creative stuff which gets gradually transformed into the diversity of beings and objects. *Vāk*, on the other hand, is the same *Aditi* looked from the point of view of the cognisance of this creative act. The cognisance emerges in the form of consciousness while *Vāk* is the manifest form of that consciousness. In any case, we cannot think of the reality without the involvement of *Vāk* ranging from the gross to the subtlest form and thus getting coincided with the primeval stuff of the reality itself. This coincidence of the reality and *Vāk* is the secret why we are able to rise to the position to know the reality at all. Without this co-ordination, reality and our consciousness of the reality would have little chance of meeting together so that the former might be in a position to be reflected in the latter resulting in our feeling of knowing the reality.

This correspondence between the ontological and the epistemic or, in other words, the reality and *Vāk* is symbolised marvellously by a mantra seen by *Sadhri*. In this connection, he conceives of a beautifully winged bird, which has come down to the ocean and has entered into it and observes the entire world in all its diversity from there. The seer observes that he has seen this bird from close quarters by means of his purified and mature mind. What he has seen, as he states, is that the bird is being licked by the mother, and the latter is being licked by the bird.[1]

Suparṇa or the beautiful winged bird symbolises both the Supreme Being and what lies in the inmost being of the individual corresponding to it. That it represents the Supreme Being is evident from *Dīrghatamas'* well-known mantra in which it has been stated that the Reality is one and the

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1 एकः सुपर्णः स समुद्रमा विवेश स इदं विश्वं भुवनं वि चष्टे।
तं पाकेन मनसापश्यमन्तितस्तं माता रेळिह स उ रेळिह मातरम्।। *RV.X.114.4*

same and yet is named variously by seers as *Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa* and *Agni* as well as *Suparṇa*.[2] It is also established by the famous *dva suparṇa* mantra seen by the same seer that the image of the beautiful-winged bird signifies equally well the Supreme as well as the individual in his inmost being. That the *Suparṇa* in both these capacities enters into the world, is also an established fact in the Vedic tradition. If in the individual capacity it has got engrossed in the world, in the capacity of the Creator it creates the world and enters into it without getting engrossed.[3] Since, however, the *Suparṇa* in the mantra under consideration has been taken as one and is said to observe the entire world from within the sea, it has obviously to be understood as representing the Supreme in particular. But, at the same time, since the source of knowledge of the Supreme in the Vedic *sādhanā* is the inmost being of the individual itself, the latter cannot be kept entirely apart from the scenario. Thus the entrance of the *Suparṇa* in the sea of the world is to be taken as a mixed affair, as relating to the Supreme from one point of view and to the inmost being of the individual from another.

The sea obviously is symbolical of the world but particularly one as visualised by the seer where there is transparency of understanding as well as vividness of dynamism. In this way, it represents the psyche of the seer in its entire expanse including the sensory on the one side and the supramental on the other. In this psychic being of his the seer observes a pair of birds caressing each other as the mother and her young one. As the seer claims to see them most intimately and with his purified mind, his seeing must be something supramental rather than sensory or mental. Use of the word *antitah*, from close quarters, indicates to his seeing being direct and immediate rather than indirect or mediate. Even then, however, what he sees, he describes the same as a pair of birds. This image is obviously a borrowing from the physical world. It, thus, bears out the utmost symbolic nature of the birds.

What do these birds signify and what is the meaning of their caressing each other? *Griffith* has quoted *Ludwig* as taking them as the sun and the dawn. No doubt, the close succession of the dawn and the sun in the horizon may be very well considered figuratively as amounting to

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2 इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गुरुत्मान्।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः।। *Ibid.,I.164.46*

3 तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत्। *Tait.Up.II.6*

caressing each other. On account of the sun rising from within the dawn, they may also be taken as the mother and the child, as is practically borne out by references to them as such in the *Samhitā*. But since the context of the hymn relates to something other than the sun and the dawn, dragging of it to that common spectacle of nature would be absolutely unjustified. *Sāyaṇa*, on the other hand, is indecisive. At the outset he considers the bird, which is said to have entered into the sea, as the air, taking at the same time the intermediate space as the sea, which the former has entered into. Accordingly, he regards the seeing of the creation by this bird as amounting to operating from within all the living beings in the universe possibly as their breath. He takes the other bird to stand for what he calls the intermediate sound, *madhyamika Vāk*, meaning thereby the sound produced in that space on account of flashing of the lightning or blowing of the wind. The difficulty with this interpretation is that, it being admitted, the interrelationship of the two birds would get reversed, the mother will become the child while the child will become the mother or rather the father of that child.

In view of this anomaly perhaps or by way of offering an alternative spiritual interpretation of it, as is usual with him in regard to such mantras having mystic bearing, he takes the bird, which is said to have entered into the sea, to represent either the life-breath or God himself while the sea to stand for the world as such. The life-breath, getting engrossed in the world, naturally observes things which come into its contact. God also, on the other hand, has everything in his view by virtue of his omniscience. Projecting both these possibilities equally throughout the alternative explanation, however, he towards the end of it comes down to the mutual relationship of the breath and the speech in the individual and ends up with the remark that since in the state of sleep the function of speaking disappears, it may be conceived, as the seer, according to him, has practically done, that the mother is caressing the child. Inversely, he may be understood to mean that the caressing of the mother by the child is symbolical of the state of waking and speaking when breathing gives way to speaking.

Sāyaṇa's alternative interpretation is ingenious no doubt inasmuch as it admits of the symbolism referring here to the phenomenon of speech but his eventual narrowing down of the thrust of ideas to the states of waking and sleeping in an individual's life and his leaving the universal side of the symbolism uncared for, does not take us across the remaining details of the hymn, besides leaving unexplained several ideas of the mantra

under consideration itself. For instance, is it the phenomenon of appearance and disappearance of speech during the states of waking and sleeping respectively, as obtaining in an individual's life, adequate enough to evoke the imagery of the particular bird entering into the sea and observing the entire creation in one glance? Moreover, is the interrelationship of speech and breath so elevated a phenomenon as to require the maturity of mind of the seer to visualise and image it out so seriously and consider it as a significant achievement of his life?

In fact, the Vedic seer pays heed to small things also within as well as around him, however, not to end up with them but to make out things of universal importance through them. Accordingly, it is quite right to think that *Sadhri* also might possibly have brooded over the interrelationship of *Vāk* and *Prāṇa* quite for sometime during the period of his *tapas*, but that brooding getting crystallised into deep meditation must not only have purified his mind and brought maturity to it but also have enabled him to see how these small but vital functions of life trace their origin back to something universal and even transcendent. This is how breath may be traced to the Creator while speech to *Vāk*, the universal Creatrix. It is from the view point of this possibility that the seer would be required to commit his entire maturity and purity of mind to see how the two beautiful-winged birds are caressing each other as the mother and the child in spite of the fact that the latter bird is capable of casting its glance over the whole world simultaneously.

This line of interpretation gets positive support from the next mantra of the hymn as well as from the immediately preceding one. To take the following one first, here the beautiful-winged bird acting as the child in the previous mantra is said to be imaged out variously by seers articulating themselves by means of words as well as reciting mantras in sacrifices and placing as many as twelve cups of *Soma* in its honour.[4] It goes without saying that the main thrust of the ideas of this mantra is the same as that of *Dirghatamas'* mantra quoted at *footnote No.2* above in which it is stated that the reality is one but is spoken of variously by seers such as *Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni* and *Suparṇa*. Over and above the basic content of that mantra, what the present one adds is the bringing of that *Suparṇa* down to the sacrificial ground, making him listen to the prayers

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4 सुपर्णं विप्राः कवयो वचोभिरेकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति।
छन्दांसि च दधतो अध्वरेषु गृहान्त्सोमस्य मिमते द्वादश।। *RV.X.114.5*

and partaking of the *Soma* in as many as twelve cups. The number twelve is associated in the Veda particularly with the number of months in a year. The year, on the other hand, is symbolical of time as such.Drinking of *Soma* by *Suparṇa* in the sacrifice out of twelve cups, therefore, is the symbolical way of suggesting that he remains all the time engrossed in taking delight in the affairs of the world considered as a sacrifice. Thus the sea of the previous mantra wherein the *Suparṇa* is said to have entered is replaced by sacrifice in this mantra where he remains relishing the *Soma* juice throughout the whole year having understandably assumed the form of the twelve *Ādityas*. As regards the symbolical sense of the sacrificial ground, we have already noted how the Vedic seer considers the fire-pit in the sacrificial ground as the centre of the creation and the sacrificial ground itself, therefore, as a replica of the universe. Thus we can determine that the sea of the previous mantra is nothing but the world itself and that the *Suparṇa's* taking of *Soma* in the form of the *Ādityas* is equivalent to his taking the delight of becoming in the process of the world. His listening to the mantras recited by seers in different metres in course of sacrifice is also a symbolical act amounting to his remaining in the contact of *Vāk* all the time while at the same time enjoying the delight of becoming in the form of the *Soma* juice. This is what the previous mantra brings out through the imagery of the mother and the child caressing each other while lying in the midst of the sea where the mother is lying already and the child itself has entered. By virtue of being the Creatrix of the world, the mother lies all the time there in the world while the child, being the primeval Creator, enters the creation after having accomplished it.

On the occasion of their reunion in the ocean of the world, however, while keeping caressing each other they naturally must produce their peculiar notes. It is these notes which form the seed of *Vāk* as it is available to the creatures of the creation for their re-modulation and peculiar usages. Whatever the *Parā* state of *Vāk*, which, as is implied by this term itself, must be transcendent, the *paśyantī* state of it at least requires some sort of duality for its operation in which *Vāk* has to see something or someone lying before her. What other imagery can be so appropriate for this occasion as the union of the mother and the child particularly in the novel context as the world is, where they can give articulation to their feelings, emotions and ideas most luxuriantly!

As regards the mantra occurring previous to one under consideration, it talks of a young woman keeping four locks of hair and being beautiful and

glittering in her face and having put on knowledge and wisdom as her clothes. On her are said to sit two beautiful-winged and mighty birds. This is also stated to be place where the gods receive their respective portions.[5] This mantra has been explained by *Sāyaṇa* first in terms of sacrifice. The lady with our locks of hair, according to him, stands for the fire-pit particularly of the quadrangular shape. The glittering look of the lady has been supposed by him to speak of the abundant use of *ghṛta* in the sacrifice. He explains her cloth of wisdom and knowledge in terms of the rules and regulations governing the construction of the pit. The beautiful-winged pair of birds has been taken by him to stand either for the sacrificer and his wife or for the sacrificer and the priest sitting beside the fire-pit.

Sāyaṇa, however, gives an alternative interpretation of it also. He considers the lady to represent *Vāk*. Her four locks of hair, in his view, stand for the four grammatical categories of words known as noun (*nāma*) verb (*ākhyāta*), preposition (*upasarga*) and conjunction (*nipāta*). The glitter that has been ascribed to her face in the imagery is explained in this context by him in terms of the glitter of the letters used in the language. Her cloth of knowledge and wisdom is taken by him to stand for these as implicit in the *Vāk*, particularly of the higher variety such as has been used in the *Upaniṣads*.

As regards the interpretation of the four locks of the hair, they fit in more in the context of *Vāk* than that of the fire-pit. Locks of hair are the exterior-most manifestation of the body while corners are integral parts of the shape of the pit. As we have already seen, *Vāk* is infinitely much more than language which is an outer manifestation of *Vāk*. As such, to think of the grammatical categories of words in a certain language in terms of the locks of hair is quite legitimate. This viewpoint gets support also from *Patañjali's* interpretation of the four horns of the bull as envisioned by seer *Vāmadeva*. The bull is said to be four-horned, three-footed, two-headed, and as possessed of seven hands. *Patañjali* also in that mantra takes the four horns of the bull to symbolise pre-eminently the same four categories of words. Hair and horns are kindred from the biological viewpoint and if they in common come to signify one and the same thing in the visions of two such distant seers from each other as *Vāmadeva* and *Sadhri*, it only adds to the credit of the precision of their visions.

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5 चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः सुपेशा घृतप्रतीका वयुनानि वस्ते।
तस्यां सुपर्णा वृषणा निषेदतुर्यत्र देवा दधिरे भागधेयम्।। *Ibid.,X.114.3*

Significantly enough, it has to be noted here that as per the ancient Indian tradition young ladies normally keep two locks of hair. As against it, if the lady in this mantra is said to keep four locks, it does not necessarily mean any departure from the tradition or any innovation on it, but just an alteration made by the seer himself in the existing situation so as to carve out a symbol appropriate enough to embody the idea he intends to symbolise. When faced with the pertinent idea crying for symbolisation, if *Sadhri* could think of four in place of two actual locks, which, too, is not impossible, *Vāmadeva* did not feel deterred in conceiving of rather the impossible in the form of the four-horned bull having three legs, two heads and seven hands besides. Such angularities are the keys left by the seer at places to help us in getting to the wealth of ideas and experiences bequeathed by him to us.

So far as *Sāyaṇa's* interpretation of the term *ghṛtapratika*, having her face besmeared with *ghṛta,* in terms of the fire-pit is concerned, it is to be noted that this interpretation is rather literal which is least feasible in such a highly figurative mantra. As such, *ghṛta* must stand for something actually other but functionally akin to clarified butter. This looks quite feasible in his second interpretation where *ghṛta* is taken to symbolise the glitter of the letters. Each letter, as an embodiment of the peculiar sound it embodies, may naturally be taken to have an intellectual glitter about it. As the goddess *Vāk* is bedecked with the garland of letters, it is but natural for her to have a glittering face. It is not necessary, however, to associate the glitter of her face with the glitter of the letters. *Vāk* in itself is a light, as the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* observes.[6]

So is the case with the interpretation of the term *Vāyunani vaste*, in which the young lady is conceived as putting on the garment of knowledge and wisdom. This imagery also suits much more the *Vāk* than the fire-pit. Most decisive, however, is the image of the two beautiful-winged birds taking their seats on the lady. *Sāyaṇa's* interpretation of the locative in *tasyām* in terms of proximity to the fire-pit is unwarranted. The lady, in this vision, plays the same role in regard to the pair of beautiful-winged birds as the *peepul* tree representing the cosmos plays in regard to the same pair of birds in the famous mantra seen by *Dirghatamas* and as referred to earlier. As such, instead of the sacrificer and his wife or the former and the priest, as *Sāyaṇa* proposes in his sacrificial interpretation,

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6 अस्तमित आदित्ये याज्ञवल्क्य चन्द्रमस्यस्तमिते शान्तेऽग्नौ किंज्योतिरेवायं पुरुष इति। वागेवास्य ज्योतिर्भवति। वाचैवायं ज्योतिषाऽऽस्ते। *Brh.Up.IV.3.5*

the two birds are to be treated as representing the individual Self and the Supreme as indicated by himself in his alternative explanation. If the *Suparṇa* in the fourth and the fifth mantras of this hymn itself symbolises the Supreme, as we already have observed, it is rather ridiculous to take him to represent the sacrificer etc., in their limited functions.

The basic difference between *Dirghatamas'* and *Sadhri's* visions of the two beautiful-winged birds sitting on the *peepal* tree and the young lady respectively is that while the former describes the reality from the ontological viewpoint, the latter does so from the epistemic. This is evident from *Sadhri* making use of the lady as the resort of the pair of birds in place of *Dhirgatamas'* tree. While the tree is the symbol of the world, the lady represents *Vāk*. If the sitting of the two birds on the tree of the world amounts to taking cognisance of the presence of the Supreme in individual and universal both the capacities in the world bearing the possibility of elevation of the former to the status of the latter, the sitting of the same two birds on the shoulders of the lady signifies the summary presence of the same Supreme along with its individual manifestations in the *Vāk*.

The point of co-ordination between *Vāk* and the reality is the central theme of the rest of the hymn comprising the first two mantras in the beginning and the rest of the four coming towards the end. The seer finds this point of co-ordination illustrated in sacrifice. Sacrifice is a replica of the universal process wherein the fire-pit occupies the central position. It is around the fire-pit that both gods and men, as represented by the sacrificer, sit and symbolically do what they have to do really on the larger canvas of actuality. On the canvas of actuality, gods have to keep themselves busy with the onerous task of sustaining the creation by making it run on the path of *Ṛta*. The humans, on the other hand, are expected to remain cognisant of all this process and regulate their acts in keeping with this scheme of things. Being a miniature of the functioning of *Ṛta* along with the contributions of gods and men to it, sacrifice symbolises all this in a nutshell.

In the model of sacrifice conceived by the seer of this hymn, forty cups filled with *Soma* are supposed to be placed in the service of the thirty-three gods and the seven planes of being as the token of man's cognisance of their role in running the cosmos as well as the symbol of his gratitude towards them whose noble effort has created the situation in which he has got the opportunity of playing his significant role. In this sacrifice as

contemplated by the higher intellect of the seer, *Rk* and *Sāman* mantras in a variety of metres numbering twelve are recited and chanted. On account of representing the universal process in its entire dynamics, if this sacrifice were to be conceived as a moving chariot, as the seer of the hymn actually does, the recitation and chanting of mantras continuing all the time from the beginning to the end would serve as the words of the charioteer uttered for controlling the horses and keeping the chariot on the proper track besides maintaining the required speed. As such, wherever the chariot of the sacrifice, representing the cosmos in its entire dynamics, would go, the word of the charioteer also representing the recitation and chanting of mantras would accompany it. This is what *Sadhri* amounts to say in the sixth mantra of the hymn when he observes that having contemplated on forty cups as also having commissioned twelve varieties of metres the seers have conceived of a sacrifice through their higher intellect and are driving the chariot by means of *Rk* and *Sāman* mantras recited and chanted.[7]

The next mantra of the hymn also suggests to the co-ordination through the use of a partly different set of images. The dynamics of the world as represented by the sacrifice, the seer observes, results in the manifestation of the fourteen grades of being. This sacrifice along with all these manifestations also is being led by the seven highly sagacious seers by means of recitation and chanting of the sacred words. In this colossal journey, the seer asks, where lies the fordable point by traversing along which the gods may drink the *Soma* prepared by him by squeezing the creeper.[8]

It is, however, the next mantra in the hymn, which brings the idea of co-ordination of the *Vāk* and the reality to utmost clarity and culmination. It conceives of all states uttered in co-ordination to the reality as of fifteen varieties corresponding perhaps to the fourteen grades of being and the central reality manifesting itself in the form of those grades. Each one of these varieties, however, the seer states, may comprise thousands of sub-varieties. Each grade of manifestation also, according to the seer, may have thousands of varieties within it. Thousand being the symbol of innumerability in the Veda, if, according to *Sadhri*, the reality is

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7 षटत्रिंशांश्चे चतुरः कल्पयन्तश्छन्दांसि च दधत आद्वादशम्।
यज्ञं विमाय कवयो मनीष ऋक्सामाभ्यां प्र रथं वर्तयन्ति।। *RV.X.114.6*

8 चतुर्दशान्ये महिमानो अस्य तं धीरा वाचा प्रणयन्ति सप्त।
आप्नानं तीर्थे क इह प्रवोचद्येन पथा प्रपिबन्ते सुतस्य।। *Ibid.,X.114.7*

innumerable in its manifestations, equally innumerable are the articulations concerning them. If the reality encompasses the entire space lying between the heaven and the earth, observes the seer, so does *Vāk*, he asserts. The heaven and the earth, however, include within them only the fourteen grades of being which are only manifestations of the Reality. Rising above their range, therefore, the seer observes that *Vāk* is actually as extensive as *Brahman*, the Reality itself in its core as well as in its manifestations.[9]

The infiniteness of the reality even in its physical form has somehow come to be grasped by mankind today in the form of innumerable galaxies in the universe each one of which comprising innumerable stars with the possibility of each one of them operating like a solar system in itself. It is also being reckoned as a probability that there may be other universes also besides our own. What mankind, however, is generally still not aware of is the co-extensiveness of the *Vāk* with the reality. This obviously is due to his cherishing a very narrow view of *Vāk*, that is, as simply the language which is learnt in one's lifetime and is limited to a number of words, no matter, howsoever large. It is against this background that we can understand the width and depth of the vision of the Vedic seer concerning the phenomenon of *Vāk* and hence the necessity of his taking resort to the symbolic way of expression in regard to it also.

While remaining symbolic in his expression almost throughout, he sometimes comes to state things plainly also, as is the case with the last mantra discussed above. Here his expression, ceasing to be symbolic, becomes plainly categorical. This sort of expression, however, as we see here, closely follows the symbolic exuberance, and, therefore, may be regarded as a product of it. Lofty visions, such as this one, can be subjected to expression primarily in the symbolic mode. Their articulation in plain language can only follow the symbolic mode of expression.

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9 सहस्रधा पञ्चदशान्युक्था यावद् द्यावापृथिवी तावदित् तत्।
सहस्रधा महिमानेः सहस्रं यावद् ब्रह्म विष्ठितं तावती वाक्।। *Ibid.,X.114.8*

Sarasvati

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Besides cow, Sarasvatī is another prominent symbolic form given to *Vāk* in the Vedas and as such she permeates the entire cultural milieu of India as the goddess of learning since. It is but legitimate that what was conceived of as a symbol of *Vāk* originally, evolved into the goddess of learning eventually, since language has played the most vital role in the acquisition of learning by mankind. But what is peculiar is that *Sarasvatī* in the Veda occurs not only as a symbol of *Vāk* but also as a river and that also not as any feeble one but as one of the mightiest rivers of the then Indian, no less mighty than the *Sindhu* itself. *Sarasvatī*, according to the *Ṛgvedic* account, emerges from the mountains and merges into the sea. Her emergence from the mountain is by no means peaceful. She is said to break the mountainous ranges by her tremendous stream like anyone digging out the root of the lotus. This she does on her both the sides equally.[1] Indian rivers in plains normally take to only one of their banks at one point for breaking with the flow of their water. It is only in the mountainous region that they are prone to strike at both the banks simultaneously. The Vedic seer's account of *Sarasvatī* as such, shows that he was acquainted with the course of the river deep in the Himalayas as well. This gets confirmed also by *Vasiṣṭha's* account of her as a mighty river flowing clear water from the mountains to the sea.[2] Use of the plural form of *giri*, mountain, by the seer bears out his actual acquaintance with the Himalayan ranges. So may also be said about his familiarity with the sea. Without such familiarity, it was difficult to account for his description of the river as falling in the sea.

Besides *Vasiṣṭha*, there are several other seers who show their familiarity with this river at least in her flow at the intermediate stage where very many rivers formed confluence with her. Seer *Ṛjisvan*, for instance, observes how the river *Sarasvatī* was getting swelled by her tributaries.[3] Seer *Atri* happens to name two of such tributaries, or at least as co-rivers,

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1 इयं शुष्मेभिर्बिसरवा इवारुजत् सानु गिरीणां तविषेभिरूर्मिभिः।
पारावतघ्नीमवसे सुवृक्तिभिः सरस्वतीमा विवासेम धीतिभिः।। *RV. VI.61.2*

2 एकाचेतत् सरस्वती नदीनां शुचिर्यती गिरिभ्य आ समुद्रात्। *Ibid., VII.95.2*

3 सरस्वती सिन्धुभिः पिन्वमाना। *Ibid., VI.52.6*

as *Brhaddivā* and *Rākā*.[4] *Vasistha* elsewhere enumerates her as the seventh one characterising her at the same time as the *sindhumātā*, mother of streams.[5] What the other six rivers referred to by the seer, besides the *Sarasvatī*, are, is a problem. Scholars looking at the scenario from the western side identify them as *Sindhu, Vitastā, Asiknī, Paruṣṇī, Vipāśā* and *Śutudrī*. But this identification is arbitrary on two accounts. In the first place, the process of enumeration can equally well be started from the eastern side taking into account the *Gangā*, the *Yamunā*, and their tributaries. Secondly, if the above-mentioned rivers alone are taken into account, what will happen to *Bṛhaddivā* and *Rākā* which also have been mentioned by *Atri* as rivers obviously in the proximity of *Sarasvatī*? This controversy apart, however, characterisation of the *Sarasvatī* as *sindhumātā* does not get explained satisfactorily by taking her as the source of water, as *Sāyaṇa* has proposed or as `*mother of floods*', as *Griffith* has rendered it. For, the word *sindhu* in the Veda means either the particular river of this name or the rivers in general or alternatively the ocean itself. As the context does not lend support to *Sarasvatī* being considered the mother of the *Sindhu* or that of the ocean, we are left only with the option that the term *sindhu* has been used here in the generic sense of river as such and that, therefore, it refers to some sort of branching in her and making her thus the source of a number of streams. If she has so many tributaries making her turn into a mighty river in her earlier part, she gets bifurcated into several streams subsequently due to her unwieldliness. This idea gets significantly corroborated by a Yajurvedic mantra in which it has been stated that five rivers merge into the *Sarasvatī* with their entire flow of water and coming down to the plains the river *Sarasvatī* gets bifurcated into the same number of streams.[6]

The description of the *Sarasvatī* as the mother of rivers may be taken to reflect the actuality in a twofold manner. In one case, it may be supposed to refer to the situation where the river got bifurcated into several streams due either to her too much expansion particularly while passing through the present day *Rajasthan*. The land being plain and sandy, it was quite possible that the big volume of the water of the river expanded far and

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4 सरस्वती बृहद्दिवोत राका। *Ibid., V.42.12*

5 सरस्वती सप्तथी सिन्धुमाता। *Ibid., VII.36.6.*

6 पञ्च नद्यः सरस्वतीमपि यन्ति सस्रोतसः।
सरस्वती तु पञ्चधा सो देशेऽभवत् सरित्।। *YV.XXXIV.11*

wide and in course of time took the form of separate streams and merged as such in the Arabian sea. In this regard, it is significant to note that archaeological excavations and land-set imagery conducted during the last two-three decades have revealed the bed of a dry river in the same area the *Sarasvatī* is supposed to have flowed along. This bed ranges from three to ten kilometres in width. It has also been observed in this connection that there is a region known as *Panchbhadra* near *Barmer*. Five rivers, namely, *Guhyā, Jojārī, Leek, Dabariyā* and *Looni* flow along this region even today.[7] They may be taken to be the remnants of the *Sarasvatī* along with the streams emerging out of her.

Secondly, and as a corollary to the above, use of the term *sindhumātā* for the *Sarasvatī* may be taken to reflect the antecedents of the circumstances under which the mighty river got so widely diversified in her course as to enter into the *Yamunā* and give rise to the legend of the third invisible *Sarasvatī* entering into the confluence of *Gangā* and *Yamunā* at *Prayāg* on the eastern side and join the Indus *via Bahawalpur* on the western side, as has been discovered through the land-set imagery recently.

Whether all this happened due to environmental changes or tectonic movements, we are not in a position to determine precisely at this stage of our knowledge of the facts. Corroboration of the Vedic accounts by the findings of archaeologists to this remarkable extent, however, does not leave any doubt regarding the fact that *Sarasvatī* was an actual river as she was known to Vedic seers. She flowed from the high Himalayas to the Arabian sea *via Kurukshetra, Pehova, Sirsa, Nohar, Revatsara, Hanumangarh, Kalibangan, Suratgarh, Bikaner, Pokharan, Jodhpur, Anupagarh, Panchabhadra, Jalore, Rann of Kutch* and *Prabhasa Pattan* near *Somnath*. She was a mighty river capable of breaking through the ranges of the mountain. She had several tributaries entering into her as well as a number of streams arising out of her. Besides being the mightiest river of the age, she was regarded as most sacred also, as sacred, of course, as the *Gangā* subsequently. This is evident from her characterisation as *pāvakā*, purifying, by seer *Madhucchandas* and *nadītamā*, the best of rivers, by *Grtsamada*.[8] Indeed, it appears that the

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7 *Vedagya Ārya, The Vedic Sarasvatī River: A Source of Indian Culture, (Indus-Sarasvatī Age and Ancient India, Waves, USA, 1998), p.28*

8 *RV.I.3.10 and II.41.16*

Gangā happened to be elevated to the position of the most purifying and best of rivers in succession of the *Sarasvatī*. The supremely purifying character of the unpolluted water of the *Gangā* is an attested fact. As such, the sanctity associated with her is by no means a matter of sheer sentiment and belief. Now the question arises, whether or not the same was true of the water of the *Sarasvatī* also behind her characterisation by the Vedic seer as the most sanctifying and the best of the rivers. If that also is as objectively valid a fact as that regarding the *Gangā*, it will have to be admitted that both these rivers have been physically connected with each other, no matter whether originally in their Himalayan source or subsequently through tectonic movements in their catchment areas resulting in the drying up of *Sarasvatī* and diversion of the major portion of her water to the *Gangā*. In this regard, one significant fact needing to be noted is that a mighty stream of water falling into the *Alakanandā* a little downwards the *Badarikasrama* is even today known as *Sarasvatī*.

That *Sarasvatī* was a vibrant river serving as the cradle of the Vedic *sādhanā* in the form of *yajña* and *yoga* both is evident, besides numerous other details, also from the story of *Kavaşa Ailūşa*, an important *Rgvedic* seer, as narrated in the *Aitareya* and *Śāmkhāyana Brāhmaṇas*. According to the narration, once a *Soma* sacrifice to last for a quarter of a year was arranged for at the bank of *Sarasvatī*. A number of priests were engaged in the performance. *Kavaşa Ailūşa* was one of them. The other priests expressed their indignation at the presence of *Kavaşa Ailūşa* as they understood that he was the son of an illegal wife and a gambler, besides. They refused to take their food along with him. In view of this disregard, he got angry and went to a secluded place quite at a distance from the *Sarasvatī* and absolutely bereft of water. He practised *tapas* there and as a result of it had the vision of a certain hymn occurring at *Ṛgveda X.30* and addressed to *Apām Napāt*. Being invoked, *Sarasvatī* came to him with the consequence that there was water all around him. This incident elevated him in the eye of other priests. He came to be regarded not only as taintless but also as a veritable seer. They approached him with respect addressing him as a seer. They begged his pardon for the disrespect they had shown to him and accepted his supremacy amongst them since *Sarasvatī* had responded to his invocation by her presence.[9]

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* narrates the story with a slight variation. According to it, the priests themselves took him to a place away from the

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9 *Śāmkhāyana Brāhmaṇa XII.3*

bank of *Sarasvatī* with a view to depriving him of the water of *Sarasvatī* as he was not worthy of it. The place he was deserted at had no water at all. Put under this precarious condition, *Kavaşa Ailūşa* saw the hymns concerned as addressed to *Apām Napāt* having had his access to the blessed source of water. *Sarasvatī* followed him wherever he went. As an evidence to the veracity of this anecdote the *Brāhmaṇa* refers to the name of that place as *Parisāraka*, the person concerned making the concerned agency go around.[10]

Apart from other things which will be discussed in the sequel, this anecdote in the least indicates to the fact that *Sarasvatī* was so mighty a river as to take within her flow even such areas which were quite distant from her normal course. This could have been possible due to unusual rise in her water level as also due to getting the same diverted to absolutely dry areas and thus forming new channels of water. This probability as suggested by the anecdote, accords well with the Yajurvedic reference quoted above to the effect how the *Sarasvatī* got diversified into as many as five streams. The topography of the place *Kavaşa Ailūşa* was banished to also reveals that all this most probably took place in the desert of *Rajasthan*, lack, as it did, in rain and river water both.

The basic motivation behind the creation of this new channel of the river was obviously the *tapas* and invocation of the seer concerned and by no means any physical event or human engineering whatever. He could accomplish this task by reaching the source of water in *Apām Napāt* and invoking *Sarasvatī* not as a river but as a goddess. From his viewpoint, she primarily was a goddess and only secondarily a river, since it was the invocation to the goddess which resulted in the creation of the new channel of the river. This is true not only of *Kavaşa Ailūşa* but also of a number of Vedic seers including *Madhucchandas, Gṛtsamada, Bharadvāja, Vasiṣṭha and Priyamedha. Gṛtsamada*, for instance, invokes her as the best of the mothers, best of the rivers as well as the best of the goddesses.[11]

From the modern anthropological viewpoint, however, *Sarasvatī* was nothing but a sheer river. There was nothing divine about her. If she happened to be regarded and extolled as a goddess, that was out of the river's striking spectacle and understanding on behalf of the people

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10 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VIII.1*

11 अम्बितमे॒ नदीतमे॒ देवितमे॒ सर॑स्वती। *RV.II.41.16*

concerned regarding her usefulness to them. As the river presented a mightily impressive spectacle, the viewpoint asserts, she came to be considered as having a certain superhuman agency working behind her. As she was found beneficial over all, the agency concerned was regarded as divine. That supposed agency naturally came to be named as *Sarasvatī* after the river herself. The word *Sarasvatī* being feminine in form, the agency came to be taken as a goddess rather than as a god. As *Sarasvatī* was the mightiest as known to the seers, she automatically came to be regarded as the greatest of the goddesses besides the greatest of the rivers.

This obviously is a viewpoint very much practical and formed as a result of thorough observation throughout the world as accessible to scholars working in the area during the last two hundred years. Vedic gods and goddesses, including *Sarasvatī,* are supposed to illustrate this viewpoint very well. Now, if this were the case, it was more likely that the physical form of *Sarasvatī* as well as of other rivers or indeed other spectacles in nature, was forgotten long long ago as it presented an obstacle in the operation of the idea of goddess on her, as it happened in the case of other ancient traditions such as the Egyptian and the Greek. There are gods and goddesses in those traditions also but association of them with the natural phenomena, if any, has already been forgotten in their make up. In the case of superimposition of a certain supernatural idea on a certain natural spectacle, it is always expected that the idea superimposed would do away with the object it has got superimposed on. A bush in the darkness of the night cannot be seen as both the bush and the evil spirit simultaneously. It would be seen wholly as an evil spirit if the superimposition is complete and barely as a bush if it is incomplete.

The bush and the evil spirit cannot co-exist in the eye of the observer. As against it, what we find in the Veda is that the divinity concerned subsists in perfect co-ordination with the natural spectacle concerned. This is true as much of *Sarasvatī* as of *Agni, Sūrya* and *Uṣas*. The co-existence of both the aspects of *Sarasvatī* in the Veda has been taken note of by as early an authority as *Yāska* himself. "*The word Sarasvatī occurs in the Veda*", observes he, "*in the sense of both the river and the goddess.*"[12] Though she, as a river, disappeared in the era subsequent to the Vedic age, probably during the second millennium B.C., she has been kept intact in

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12 तत्र सरस्वती इत्येतस्य नदीवत् देवतावच्च निगमा भवन्ति। *Yāska, Nirukta, XI.26*

the Indian mind not only through the Veda but also practically through the idea of her transfiguration in *Prayāg* as well as under slightly changed denominations such as *Hākarā, Guhyā* and *Looni* in her catchment area.

Sarasvatī has been associated in the Veda not only with rivers such as *Bṛhaddivā, Rākā* and *Dṛśadvatī* besides the unnamed five ones merging in her and five others emerging out of her, as also, or perhaps including, the group of seven rivers led by her as the seventh of them, but also with a number of gods and goddesses such as the *Aśvins, Indra, Iḷā,* and *Bhārati,* who, excepting *Indra*, have little to do with the phenomenon of water and much less with that flowing in a river. It suggests that the range of *Sarasvatī* is much wider than that of the particular river going after her name. That this is not any subsequent development, as is expected under the assumption of the *Āryan Invasion* theory, but lies already there in the heart of the *Ṛgveda* itself, is evident from the occurrence of several of the mantras of this import in the second and, the third *maṇdala* of the *Samhitā*. In the second *maṇdala* of the *Samhitā*, for instance, by way of identifying *Agni* with *Aditi, Bharati, Iḷā* and *Sarasvatī* alternately, the last one has been characterised as the killer of *Vṛtra* in common with *Agni.*[13] If goddess *Sarasvatī* were the result of personification of the river of this name, how could it be possible for her to be associated with the killing of *Vṛtra* at least in that portion of the *Samhitā* which is supposed to consist of the earliest composition of the invading Āryans? Similarly in the third *maṇdala* of the *Samhitā* there is a mantra in which goddesses *Bharati, Iḷā* and *Sarasvatī* have been invoked to come and sit together on the seat prepared out of the sacred grass.[14] In the second *maṇdala* itself *Sarasvatī* , as regulator of the intellect, has been invoked along with *Ila* and *Bharati* and has been prayed to come and take her seat on the sacred grass and provide fool-proof protection to the seer.[15] In another mantra seen by the same seer, she has been invoked in company of several such goddesses who have little to do with the river's

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13 त्वमग्ने अदितिर्देव दाशुषे त्वं होत्रा भारती वर्धसे गिरा।
त्वमिळो शतहिमासि दक्षसे त्वं वृत्रहा वसुपते सरस्वती।। *RV.II.1.11*

14 आ भारती भारतीभिः सजोषा इळा देवैर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः।
सरस्वती सारस्वतेभिरर्वाक् तिस्रो देवीर्बर्हिरिदं सदन्तु।। *Ibid.,III.4.8*

15 सरस्वती साधयन्ती धियं न इळा देवी भारती विश्वतूर्तिः।
तिस्रो देवीः स्वधया बर्हिरेदमच्छिद्रं पान्तु शरणं निषद्य।। *Ibid.,II.3.8*

water. These are *Gungu, Sinivali, Rākā, Indrāṇī* and *Varuṇānī.*[16] While *Gungu, Sinivali* and *Rākā* are associated with the moon, *Indrāṇī* and *Varuṇānī* are the female counterparts of *Indra* and *Varuṇa* respectively. If any physical ground is traceable behind their association with *Sarasvatī*, that obviously lies in the moon exercising her gravitational pull on water when she is in her full splendour on the full-moon day, and *Indrāṇī 's* counterpart serving partly as the god of rain and *Varuṇānī's* counterpart as that of water as such. But these associative ideas are too subtle to have dawned upon the Vedic people thinking about the river concerned at the first sight, as is implied by the occurrence of the mantra in the earliest part of the *Samhitā.* They indeed have the bearing of the entire *Samhitā* on them indicating thereby the hollowness of the view regarding the Vedic mantras as verbal expression of instant reaction of the then people on the sight of natural spectacles including *Sarasvatī* as a river.

There are a few mantras occurring in the *Yajurveda* which bear out a certain relationship of *Sarasvatī* with *Indra, Varuṇa* and *Aśvins.* In one of those mantras, *Sarasvatī* is said to act as the wife of the *Aśvins* bearing to them in her womb *Indra* who gets nourished by *Varuṇa* by means of water. This water, however, is equated in the mantra with *Sāman* or the state of equipoise. This is how, the mantra states, *Indra* was born in the water for some sort of glorification.[17] This legend may very well be taken to relate to *Sarasvatī* as a river giving birth to *Indra* as the cloud under the auspices of *Varuṇa* as the Lord of the ocean. But the problem with this interpretation is that the formation of cloud out of vaporisation of water is not so tangible a phenomenon as to have been visible to the then people even on the seashore, not to talk of the bank of any river, be she *Sarasvatī* herself. Moreover, under this frame of reference, how to account for the fatherhood of the *Aśvins* who normally are taken to represent the morning and the evening stars? Besides these insurmountable difficulties involved in this naturalistic interpretation, the comparison of the essence of the waters with the *Sāman* or some sort of equipoise of extremely subtle nature remaining unaccounted for under this interpretative framework, suggests to the possibility of the whole description relating to an area of an entirely different nature.

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16 या गुङ्गूर्या सिनीवाली या राका या सरस्वती।
इन्द्राणीमह्व ऊतये वरुणानीं स्वस्तये।। *Ibid.,II.32.8*

17 सरस्वती योन्यां गर्भमन्तरश्विभ्यां पत्नी सुकृतं बिभर्ति।
अपां रसेन वरुणो न साम्नेन्द्रं श्रियै जनयन्नप्सु राजा।। *YV.XIX.94*

This possibility gets considerably strengthened by the mantra immediately preceding it. In this mantra, the *Aśvins* as the medicine-men are said to place the limbs of the body in the Self while *Sarasvatī* is said to associate the Self with the limbs. In this way, through their co-ordinated action from diametrically opposed angles, the three combined together are said to have given a form to *Indra* which is measurable by hundred in age and embodies within it the immortal light by means of the moon.[18] Obviously, in this account, the joint action of *Sarasvatī* and the *Aśvins* does not result in the birth of *Indra* himself but in the birth of a being who is modelled after *Indra* and is scheduled to live for hundred years. That everything in the world, howsoever divergent in form, is modelled after *Indra*, is an established idea in the Vedic tradition, is evident from mantras seen by as mutually distant seers as *Viśvāmitra* and *Bharadvāja*. According to *Viśvāmitra, Indra* continues constantly to create out of his own body or rather assume by himself all forms in the world.[19] Similarly, according to *Bhāradvāja*, *Indra* forms the prototype of all forms in the universe and in order to visualise that prototypal form he moves around in diverse forms by means of his inherent powers and gets facilitated in this movement by virtue of a thousand horses having been yoked to his chariot.[20] In the midst of all these forms the most cherished one is the human which *Indra* must have liked most and wherein he must have felt the real fulfilment of his marathon venture of assumption of forms. This is evident from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* also where the gods having been born of the *Puruṣa* and wishing to be provided with a unitary place of rest were presented first with the form of a cow and then with that of a horse both of which they rejected as inadequate and when presented with the human form they readily accepted it with full satisfaction. It was into this prototypal form that, besides other gods entering through different sense organs, *Indra* entered by making a hole in the saggital suture at the top of the head and remains moving from the brain to the heart in different states of consciousness.[21] Since the prototypal *Puruṣa* himself is born of water *via* the primeval *Puruṣa*, according to the *Upaniṣad*, there is nothing improbable in his having been described in the Rgvedic mantra as a

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18 अङ्गान्यात्मन् भिषजा तदश्विनात्मानमङ्गैः समधात् सरस्वती।
इन्द्रस्य रूपं शतमानमायुश्चन्द्रेण ज्योतिरमृतं दधानाः।। *Ibid., XIX.93*

19 रूपं रूपं मघवा बोभवीति मायाः कृण्वानस्तन्वं परि स्वाम्। *RV.III. 53.8*

20 रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव तदस्य रूपं प्रतिचक्षणाय।
इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयः शता दश।। *Ibid., VI 47.18.*

21 *Aitareya Up.I.1--3*

product of water. It is this primeval water which is the womb of *Sarasvatī* as goddess. This water eventually gives birth to man who is normally expected to live for hundred years and is supposed to embody *Indra* within him. When *Indra*, thus, is supposed to form the inmost being of man, he may symbolically be said to have himself been born in the form of man out of the water.

The last part of the mantra is also highly symbolic. Its symbolism lies in the representation of our psychic being by the moon. By virtue of being a product of the mind or *manas* of the primeval *Puruşa*, as the hymn to *Puruşa* has it, the moon has come to symbolise in the Veda the *manas* which may be taken to refer to the psychic being as subsisting in the heart of man as a luminous entity, and hence described by seer *Bharadvāja* as the eternal light placed in the heart.[22] This immortal light as related to the moon is said in the mantra under consideration to have been placed in the heart by the joint operation of the *Aśvins* and *Sarasvatī*. Taking the rest of the details of the mantra into account, we are now in a position to state that when the *Aśvins* unite the limbs of the body with the Self and inversely when *Sarasvatī* associates the Self with the body, this immortal light gets automatically enclosed in the heart of man. Herein lies the crux of the role of the *Aśvins* and *Sarasvatī* in the production of the human personality representing *Indra* on account of the latter being embodied in it in the form of the Self as well as the psychic being. This is the mode of their parentage of *Indra*.

This is how is explicable the association of *Sarasvatī* with such gods and goddesses as *Indra, Indrāṇī, Varuṇa, Varuṇānī, Iḷā* and *Bhārati* who, otherwise, have little to do with *Sarasvatī* as a river. Her association with the primeval water, out of which the primeval *Puruşa* was born, leads her to be symbolised by the river of that name. Or, rather to be more precise, it is due to the idea of the primary stuff of creation as water that it happens to be symbolised by *Sarasvatī* representing all the rivers at their best as the mantra quoted at *footnote No.11* maintains. If *Aditi* represents the most primeval stuff of creation out of which everything, including gods, has come and into which everything likewise would get merged, *Sarasvatī* represents that stream of the stuff which results in the emergence of man embodying within his physical and perishable frame the immortal light of consciousness and infinite capacity of understanding.

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22 ध्रुवं ज्योतिः .....हृदय आहितं यत्। *RV. VI.9.5-6*

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The word Sarasvatī can be derived in a twofold manner depending on one or the other of the two roots involved in its formation. As regards the suffixes *matup* and *nīp*, there is no controversy about them. In regard to the stem, however, it is liable to be taken as *saras* and *sa* + *ras* both. In the case of the first alternative, the stem would be derivable from the root *sṛ*, to flow, while in the case of the second one, it would have to be traced back to the root *ras*, to produce sound. Association of *Sarasvatī* with *rasa* is more than evident in a set of two mantras seen by *Pavitra Āṅgirasa*. In the first one of these mantras it has been observed that one who recites the mantras addressed to *Soma* as getting purified, which indeed is the *rasa* as fetched cumulatively by seers, he is privileged to take up all that has been tasted by god *Mātariśvan*.[1] In this mantra the delight of understanding the import of the mantras addressed to *Soma* has been symbolised by the best of all the tastes, as is evident from the statement of its equivalence with the taste of *Mātariśvan* whose basic function is to draw juices of all things. The second mantra in its first half repeats the words of the first half of the previous mantra but instead of *Mātariśvan* of that mantra it brings in *Sarasvatī* though not as the taster but as the feeder of most delicious edibles. To translate it "*One who recites the mantras addressed to Soma as getting purified, which indeed is the rasa as fetched cumulatively by the seer, to him Sarasvati yields milk, ghṛta, honey and water.*"[2] Here, in both these mantras, the delight of recitation of the mantras addressed to *Soma* has been symbolised by the tasting of the most delicious food as tasted by *Mātariśvan* and supplied by *Sarsavatī*. Out of the four edibles and drinks, namely milk, *ghṛta*, honey and water, it is only the last one, which could be supplied by *Sarasvatī* in the capacity of a river. By virtue of being mentioned as the supplier of the remaining three things, she outstands river and gets coincided with cow in regard to milk and *ghṛta* and with the harmonising genius of seers themselves which is comparable to the accomplishment of the honeybee in regard to honey. Just as honeybees fetch juices of all and sundry things within their reach and by putting them together produce a substance most delicious and wholesome to taste, even so the seers

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1 यः पावमानीरध्येत्यृषिभिः संभृतं रसम्।
सर्वं स पूतमश्नाति स्वदितं मातरिश्वना। *RMV.IX.67.31*

2 पावमानीर्यो अध्येत्यृषिभिः संभृतं रसम्।
तस्मै सरस्वती दुहे क्षीरं सर्पि मधूदकम्। *Ibid.,IX.67.32*

having seen mantras in various contexts have put them together which being recited are supposed to put honey on the palate of the reciter. Thus, by virtue of acting as the supplier of the honey of this kind, *Sarasvatī* naturally becomes the source of the seeing power of seers resulting in the composition of mantras with their viability to be recited by the reciter with the experience of having the taste of honey which is the symbol of the delight born of harmony. This is enough to vindicate that if *Sarasvatī* as river is derivable from *sṛ*, to flow, she as a reservoir of a peculiar sort of drink symbolising the delight of recitation and understanding has to be derived from the root *ras*, to utter and to taste.

This has to do intimately with the naming of *Sarsavatī*. If flow alone was responsible for letting the river be called *Sarsavatī*, this word ought to have become generic in the sense of river as such, which evidently it is not. That generic sense has rather been attached to *Sindhu*, which, however, was no less mighty in her flow at that time and remains the same even until now. It bears out that the flow alone was not responsible for naming the river as such but that the quality of the water as well as the sound produced by her flow also contributed to her denomination. Taking this assumption for granted on the basis of the possibility of the two sorts of derivation of the word, we can safely infer the association of sound and taste with the mightily comprehensive flow of the river. All these three qualities are to be found fused together in the Vedic *Sarsavatī*. And it is this fusion which has come to form the basis of symbolisation of the divinity by the river of that name.

Needless to point out that the tongue of man is the meeting ground of both, his sense of taste and his capability of speech. This cognisance on the part of Vedic seers and sages is evident in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's* following observation:

"*Vāk is indomitable. The sense of taste lies in the source of Vāk. That is why the source of Vāk also has implicit in it the sense of taste. It is on this account that from amongst all the limbs of the body, it is by means of the source of Vāk that one is capable of cognising the taste of the food he takes.*"[3]

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3 वाग्वा अषाढा। रस एष वाचि तद् रसं दधाति। तस्मात् सर्वेषामङ्गानां वाचैवान्नस्य रसं विजानाति। *Sat.Brah..VIII.5.4.1*

But the tongue in itself is not sufficient in generating either the sense of taste or the capability of speech. It has to be fed by the mind. The cognisance of this fact is explicit in the same *Brāhmaṇa's* statement that while *manas* is *Sarasvan, Vāk* is *Sarasvati* and it is a combination of these two which forms the source (of speech and taste).[4] Lacking in the co-operation of the mind and the tongue both, we can have neither the sense of taste nor can we utter any word. This point is very well embedded in a couple of mantras addressed to *Sarasvān* and seen by *Vasistha.* In the first one of these mantras the seer prays to *Sarasvān* to protect him and others of his sort by means of his waves honey-laden and spilling *ghṛta.*[5] Obviously on the physical plane we have nothing to correspond to *Sarasvān* as we have in regard to *Sarasvatī.* As such, the waves of *Sarasvān* cannot but be transference from *Sarasvati.* This fact of transference becomes still more obvious in the second mantra in which there is a reference to the breast of *Sarasvān* filled with milk through which the seer on behalf of persons of his kind wishes to be fed in progeny as well as other objects of desire.[6] In the first place, *Sarasvān* ought not to have been supposed to have any breasts and those too filled with milk. It evidently is the result of transference from *Sarasvati.* Secondly, the breast has been referred to in the singular, which biologically is anomalous. This anomaly, however, is true not only of *Sarasvan,* the male counterpart of *Sarasvati,* but also of the latter herself in a mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* in which again that breast is expected to yield for the time being at least not any drop of milk but all things desired, including jewels.[7] Likewise in *Vasiṣṭha's* mantra also, as we have already seen, the breast of *Sarasvān* is expected to feed one with progeny and all other desired things. To conceive of the breast of the male as filled with milk and that also in the singular and as capable of yielding jewels, etc., besides feeding in progeny and other things desired is, thus, a series of ideas full of anomalies too obvious not to have been eliminated. If both the seers concerned cherish these ideas notwithstanding the anomalies embedded in them, it cannot but be done so consciously and deliberately with a definite purpose behind it. That purpose conceivably is to show how *Manas* and *Vāk* have

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4 मनो वै सरस्वान् वाक् सारस्वत्येतौ सारस्वता उत्सौ। *Ibid., VII.5.1.31*

5 ये ते सरस्व ऊर्मयो मधुमन्तो घृतश्चुतः।
तेभिर्नोऽविता भव।। *RV. VII.96.5*

6 पीपिवांसं सरस्वतः स्तनं यो विश्वदर्शतः।
भक्षीमहि प्रजामिषम्।। *Ibid., VII.96.6*

7 यस्ते स्तनः शशयो यो मयोभूर्येन विश्वा पुष्यसि वार्याणि।
यो रत्नधा वसुविद् यः सुदत्रः सरस्वति तमिह धातवे कः।। *Ibid., I.164.49*

got to be co-ordinated perfectly so as to get anything of highest value. In this act of co-ordination while *Vāk* has to imbibe certain features of *Manas*, the latter also has to take upon itself certain responsibilities of *Vāk*. If *Vāk* has to make afloat the ideas emerging in *Manas*, the latter has to make them as vivid and tangible as not to be mis-spelt at all.

The basis of this co-ordination between *Vāk* and *Manas* has been prepared by conceiving of the former as a river and the latter as the reservoir of water serving as the source of the river. It is basically the water of the reservoir itself which gets channelised in the form of the river. Similarly if it is the content of *Manas* itself, which gets articulated through *Vāk*, that would be the ideal state of things. It is this possibility, which has led to tracing the root of *Vāk* to the *Parā* state *via* the *Madhyamā* and the *Paśyantī* as lying beyond the *Vaikharī*.

Sarasvati's association with *Manas* along with *Vāk* is further confirmed by an Atharvavedic mantra in which the seer expresses his satisfaction that whatever weakness had arisen in his mind and speech under the effect of adverse forces has been brought to an end by *Sarasvati* and that *Bṛhaspati*, therefore, may now along with all other gods bring order to his inner being.[8] The state of the inner being reached at through purification of *Vāk* and *Manas* as also through the harmonising effect of *Brhaspati* and other gods and goddesses is called *dhīh* in the Veda and is envisioned as the source of mantras. The custodianship of *Sarasvatī* reaches the state of *dhīh* also. This is evident from a Rgvedic mantra seen by *Vasiṣṭha* in which in the midst of other gods and goddesses being invoked for other kinds of favours, *Sarasvati* has been prayed to bless him with products of *dhīh*.[9]

Sarasvatī's association with *Vāk* is further confirmed by the *Yajurveda*. In one of its mantras it states how *Indra*, having got depleted in his virility was cured through sacrifice where *Sarasvatī* in particular acted as the curer by means of *Vāk*.[10] In another mantra while associating *Savitṛ* with

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8 यन्मे छिद्रं मनसो यच्च वाचः सरस्वती मन्युमन्तं जगाम।
विश्वैस्तद् देवैः सह संविदानः सं दधातु बृहस्पतिः।। *AV.XIX.40.1*

9 शं नो देवा विश्वेदेवा भवन्तु शं सरस्वती सह धीभिरस्तु। *RV.VII.35.11*

10 देवा यज्ञमतन्वत भेषजं भिषजाऽश्विना।
वाचा सरस्वती भिषगिन्द्रायेन्द्रियाणि दधतः।। *YV.XIX.12*

stimulation, *Tvastṛ* with form, *Pūṣaṇ* with animals, *Indra* with self, *Brhaspati* with mantra, *Varuṇa* with energy, etc., the seer links *Sarasvatī* with *Vāk*.[11] In yet another mantra, having indicated how to offer oblation to different gods and goddesses in keeping with his or her essence, it has been pointed out that *Sarasvati* ought to be offered *Vāk* since essentially she is *Vāk* itself.[12] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* accordingly points out that when it is observed in the mantra "*offerings to Sarasvatī*", it amounts to offering *Vāk* to *Vāk* itself, since *Sarasvati* is just the *Vāk*.[13]

It is evident from all these references that *Sarasvatī* essentially is a figurative representation of *Vāk* itself in its entire range of the highest possible vision, contemplation, ideation and articulation absolutely rid of aberrations. Indeed it is the aberrations which have been recounted in the Veda as the demonic forces such as *Vṛtra* and his associates and as such their elimination has been attributed to *Sarasvatī*. Since the Vedic seers had explored the phenomenon of *Vāk* up to its purest and most abundant form, they could not but be highly figurative in the expression of their experiences and ideas of it. This can be imagined from *Vasiṣṭha's* description of mantra as the goddess of higher wisdom effulgent and winning as an efficiently manufactured chariot.[14] Further in the *Yajurveda, Sarasvatī* is said to have yielded abundant milk for *Indra*.[15] Needless to point out that yielding of milk by her presupposes symbolisation of her by the cow. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, that *Vāk* has explicitly been figured out as a cow with her four *udders* named as *svāhākāra, vasaṭkāra, hantakāra* and *svadhākāra*. The first two of these udders have been said to yield milk to gods, the first three again to humans while the last one is supposed to do the same in the interest of Fathers. The range of this symbolism has further been extended to the idea of bull as the impregnator of the cow along with that of the calf as the necessary aid to the act of drawing milk from her.[16] Articulation of words is impossible without the passing of the breath through the vocal

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11 सवित्रा प्रसवित्रा सरस्वत्या वाचा..... । *Ibid.,X.30*

12 देवान् यक्षद्यथायथं ...वाचा वाचं सरस्वतीम् । *Ibid.,XXI.58*

13 सरस्वत्यै स्वाहेति वाग्वै सरस्वती वाचैवैनमेतदभिषिञ्चति । *Sat.Brah.V.3.5.8*

14 प्र शुक्रैतु देवी मनीषा अस्मत् सुतष्टो रथो न वाजी । *RV.VII.34.1*

15 सुदुघेन्दे सरस्वती । *YV.XXI.52*

16 वाचं धेनुमुपासीत् । तस्याश्चत्वारः स्तनाः स्वाहाकारो वषट्कारो हन्तकारः स्वधाकारः ।
तस्यै द्वौ स्तनौ देवा उपजीवन्ति स्वहाकारं च वषट्कारं च हन्तकारं च मनुष्याः स्वधाकारं पितरः ।
तस्याः प्राण ऋषभो मनो वत्सः । *SB.XIV.8.9.1*

organ. This idea has been brought out symbolically by conceiving of breath as a bull forming the male counterpart of the cow of *Vāk*. Further, while the bull impregnates the cow resulting in the birth of the calf, the latter's association is necessary for making the cow yield milk. The function of the calf has been ascribed in this symbolism to mind. It is only when mind is associated with *Vāk* that the latter comes to a position to utter something meaningful. That is the milk yielded by the cow of *Vāk*.

This symbolism, however, takes the humans also within its purview by conceiving of *Vāk* as an elegant woman and opening thus the way to symbolisation of it by *Sarasvati*, the goddess. In this regard an observation of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is revealing inasmuch as it in place of the *Śatapatha 's* idea of the four udders of *Vāk*, conceives of just two udders of her. These udders, the *Brāhmaṇa* states, are truth and falsehood.[17] The idea of two udders, instead of four, brings the symbolism close to the human figure. Accordingly, *Vāk* in the *Ṛgveda* has been conceived by *Bṛhaspati* as a loving wife disclosing herself completely to her equally loving husband.[18] Similarly, another seer observes with reference to *Agni* that he is offering a beautiful and fresh prayer to the deity so that it may touch his heart closely like a well-dressed loving wife doing the same to her husband.[19] Seer *Vairūpa*, likewise, conceives of *Vāk* as a young lady keeping four braids of hair, well-dressed, bright in look, having enclosed within her articles of wisdom as also having seated upon her a pair of beautiful-winged birds and having in her the provision for feeding the gods as per their respective shares.[20] The four basic kinds of words, namely, verb, noun, preposition and conjunction are supposed to have been symbolised by the braids of the lady here. The pair of beautiful-winged birds, likewise, is taken to be symbolic of the soul and God embedded in the human personality and finding expression through his speech. It is this speech or *Vāk* which has been conceived as *Sarasvatī* weaving with the help of her mind beautiful clothes for the *Aśvins* for the sake of beautifying their body.[21]

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17 वाचो वै एतौ स्तनौ सत्यानृते वाव ते। *Ait.Brah.IV.1*

18 उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन् न शृणोत्येनाम्।
उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः। *RV.X.71.4*

19 इमां प्रत्नाय सुष्टुतिं नवीयसीं वोचेयमस्मा उशते शृणोतु नः।
भूया अन्तरा हृद्यस्य निस्पृशे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः। *Ibid.,X.91.13*

20 चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः सुपेशा घृतप्रतीका वयुनानि वस्ते।
तस्यां सुपर्णा वृषणा नि षेदतु यत्रा देवा दधिरे भागधेयम्। *Ibid.,X.114.3*

21 सरस्वती मनसा पेशलं वसु नासत्याभ्यां वयति दर्शतं वपुः।। *YV. XIX.83*

It is evident from what has been observed in the foregoing that *Vāk* has every possibility of being symbolised by an elegant lady. This possibility is based on her delicateness, expressivenss and attractiveness. It is also interesting to note in this context that in the human imagination some sort of peculiar kinship has also been visualised between the woman and the river. This is evident from very many poets comparing rivers with elegant young ladies. Thus if *Vāk* can be equated to a woman and the latter to a river, there emerges every possibility of equating *Vāk* with the river. This, however, could at its best, make it possible for the river *Sarasvati* to be represented by an elegant lady. But *Sarasvatī* is much more than a lady. She is a goddess and at that the best one amongst the goddesses. It is also not the case that originally she was visualised as a river and only subsequently as a goddess. Both the features are inextricably intertwined in her right from the very beginning so far as the Vedic testimony is concerned. In view of this, it will have to be admitted that the divinity of *Sarasvatī* is based on something different from the river and that the river is simply a concrete illustration of the possible imaginary form and function of that entity which she essentially represents.

An idea of that essential entity can be had from a consideration over the content of certain mantras seen by *Bharadvāja* and *Vasistha* who evidently are two of the most ancient seers of the *Ṛgveda*. To begin with *Vasiṣṭha*, in his famous hymn addressed to *Sarasvatī*, besides describing her as a mighty one among the rivers, he characterises her as *Rodasī*, the combined form of the heaven and the earth, including necessarily the intermediate space.[22] How can a river be supposed to pervade the heaven and the intermediate space besides the earth, when it is evident that she cannot be taken to pervade singly by herself even the whole earth? It could possibly be admitted as just a vagary of the human imagination to think of a river like this, had it been confined to any single seer, no matter he be *Vasiṣṭha* himself. But the same idea is involved in *Bharadvāja's* mantra also when he describes her as pervasive of the physical worlds, the spacious heaven as well as the intermediate space and prays to her as such to protect him from condemnation.[23] This coincidence of ideas gains further significance from the fact that *Bharadvāja* belonged to a family

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22 बृहदु॑ गायिषे॒ वचो॑ऽसुर्या॒ न॒दीना॑म्।
सर॑स्वती॒मिन्महया सुवृ॒क्तिभि॒ः स्तोमै॑र्वसिष्ठ॒ रोद॑सी।। *RV., VII.96.1*

23 आप॒प्रुषी॑ पार्थि॒वान्यु॒रु रजो॑ अ॒न्तरि॑क्षम्।
सर॑स्वती॒ नि॒दस्पा॑तु।। *Ibid., VI.61.11*

entirely different from *Vasiṣṭha's* and as such there was least possibility of give and take between the two. How can a river with all her locational limitations be in a position to be conceived as pervasive of the entire space including the physical and the supra-physical and that also by two mutually unrelated seers? It indicates that in the vision of the seer, *Sarasvatī* is something universal, which however has been given the form of the river just owing to the necessity of the seer's genius to give her a tangible form communicative enough of the idea of the real entity. Since the heaven, the earth and the intermediate space form the totality of the universe in the vision of the seer, *Sarasvati* has to be regarded as an all-pervading entity.

Bharadvāja further in the next mantra of the hymn describes her summarily as indwelling the three worlds and supporting the seven ones besides acting as a promoter of the cause of the five varieties of beings.[24] In view of the content of the immediately preceding mantra, there is no point of dispute regarding the meaning of the adjective *triṣadhasthā*, indweller of the three places, which evidently are the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven. There may, however, be some doubt about the precise meaning of the term *saptadhātu* which has been introduced here all anew. What are those seven entities which *Sarasvatī* is said to support? The naturalist would like to associate them with the seven rivers of Punjab and the adjoining areas along which these rivers might have been flowing and in which row *Sarasvati* might have been occupying the pre-eminent position. This is evident from *Griffith's* translation of *saptadhātu* as seven-sisters. Thus, according to him, this term also cannot but refer to the group of the seven rivers. But this obviously involves too much dragging with the seven rivers of Punjab. Apart from the coincidence of the number seven, there is nothing in this interpretation to justify the use of the word *dhātu*, supporter. Any river can scarcely be regarded as a supporter or sustainer of the other unless it falls in the other one or forms the source of it. In the case of *Sarsavati*, the problem from this viewpoint is that the number of rivers falling in her as also emerging from her is precisely five each and by no means seven. On the other hand, the significant decisive fact in this regard is that the word *dhātu* has already occurred in the first *maṇḍala* of the *Samhitā* in the sense of the three well-known sections of the universe, that is, the

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24 त्रिषधस्थो सप्तधातुः पञ्चजाता वर्धयन्ती। *Ibid., VI.61.12*

earth, the intermediate space and the heaven in connection with the three steps of *Viṣṇu*. There he is described as *tridhātu* expressly on account of having sustained the three sections of the universe by putting his steps there.[25] In view of this evidence, it is established that by virtue of being characterised as *saptadhātu*, *Sarasvati's* role must relate basically to sections of the universe rather than to rivers, no matter they may be falling in her or emerging from her and not to talk of those flowing independently in the region. Now the question arises as to what possibly are those seven sections of the universe or even the totality of the reality, which might have been regarded by the seer as having the support of *Sarasvati* behind them. An unmistakable trace of these sections or rather grades is to be found in the famous *Aghamarṣaṇa* Hymn of the *Samhitā* where these are enumerated as *pṛthivī, antarikṣa, svah, diva, rātri, tapas* and *satya*. Indeed it is these denominations which a little subsequently came to be revised partly as *bhūḥ, bhūvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ*, and *satyam* and began to be used as the *vyāhṛtis* to refer summarily to the grades of the manifested reality, which need to be crossed one after the other to reach the Ultimate Reality.

Incidentally, *Sāyaṇa* has taken *saptadhātu* in this context alternatively in two ways, first, in the sense of the seven metres such as *gāyatri*, etc., and secondly, in the sense of seven rivers including pre-eminently the *Gangā*. This he has done in view of *Sarasvati's* double role as the goddess and the river. On account of *Sarasvati* being the goddess of *Vāk*, it was but natural for the commentator to have associated her with the metres. The metres in themselves, however, are symbolic of the seven grades of existence enumerated above. As such, his interpretation only supports the viewpoint taken up here in the explanation of the term *saptadhātu* and *via* it in the determination of the essential features of *Sarasvati*. It is also significant to note that he explains *triṣadhasthā*, used in the beginning of the mantra, in the sense of *Sarasvati's* co-existence with the three sections of the world, that is, the earth, the intermediate space and the heaven.[26] As such, *saptadhātu* or the seven grades of being she is said to support are expected legitimately enough to be more or less cognate to the three worlds she indwells. It may also be presumed that *saptadhātu*

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25 य उ त्रिधातु पृथिवीमुत द्यामेको दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा। *Ibid.,I.154.4*

26 त्रिषधस्था त्रिषु लोकेषु सहावतिष्ठमाना त्रिलोकव्यापिनी। सप्तधातुः।
सप्त धातवोऽवयवा गायत्र्याद्या गङ्गाद्या वा यस्याः तथोक्ता। *Sāyaṇa on RV.VI.61.12*

relates to a perspective wider than that signified by *trişadhasthā* since while the latter refers to her dwelling, the former concerns the real being of the goddess. To take help of the *Aghamarşaṇa* Hymn in this regard, it is significant to note that while *bhūh, bhuvah* and *svah* are grades of the tangible reality, the remaining four refer to what lies behind these in a graded way in course of their manifestation. In other words, if *bhūh, bhuvah* and *svah* form the sections of the cosmos contemporaneously, *mahah, janah, tapah* and *satyam* refer to the cosmogonic process, taking place prior to the emergence of the cosmos. To apply this point of distinction to the case of *Sarasvatī* particularly with reference to the two adjectives used for her in the mantra, if *trişadhasthā* describes the cosmic range of her pervasion, *saptadhātu* refers to her cosmogonic role behind her act of pervasion.

It is in this capacity that she is described as the highest one among the goddesses, that is, as coincident to *Aditi*, the primeval source and ultimate resort of the creation. Indeed, as distinguished from *Aditi*, she represents the cognitive aspect of the totality of the reality both in its stasis and dynamics, though with greater emphasis on her dynamic aspect, as is evident from her denomination itself. The word *Sarasvati* in its derivation from the root *sṛ* refers essentially to the process of creation particularly in its cognitive aspect, while its derivation as *sa + rasa + vati* indicates to the element of delight inherent in that cognisance.

In view of the dynamic nature of the reality she represents, she has been sought to be symbolised by seers in the form of the river *Sarsavati*. The mountains she is said to break like the lotus-stalks are the mountains of ignorance lying in the way of the process of creation and evolution. She, as breaker of banks on both sides, is the remover of limitations coming in her path of self-embodiment or manifestation. It is in this perspective that seer *Bharadvāja* proposes on behalf of mankind to offer prayers to her.[27] This feature of her character has further been brought out by ascribing to her the act of killing *Vṛtra* and rescuing what was usurped by the *Paṇis*.[28] If *Vṛtra* is the principle of destruction working behind the creative process, *Pani* symbolises the principle of limitation behind the self-manifestation of the Divine. Both these negative forces combined present a hurdle in the

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27 इयं शुष्मेभिर्बिसरवा इवारुजत् सानु गिरीणां तविषेभिरूर्मिभिः।
पारावतघ्नीमवसे सुवृक्तिभिः सरस्वतीमा विवासेम धीतिभिः। *RV. VI.61.2*

28 या शश्वन्तमाचखदावसं पणिं ता ते दात्राणि तविषा सरस्वति। *Ibid., VI.61.1*

manifestation of the essential wealth of existence. That is why *Sarasvati's* working against them has been compared to *Indra's* fighting against *Vṛtra.*[29] In view of her being an embodiment of the essential knowledge and wisdom as also a fighter against the forces contrary to these, she has been described as riding the golden chariot and killing *Vṛtra* ferociously.[30] In this capacity she is further said to be possessed of infinite quantum of energy which is indestructible, brilliant, dynamic, and pervasive like the ocean and operative in the form of sound.[31] This account of her in itself is sufficient to suggest that she is infinitely much more than the river and that the latter is simply a symbol taken recourse to by the seer for giving some idea of her in a tangible form. Otherwise, how can a river by itself be conceived by such enlightened a person like a Vedic seer as possessed of infinite quantum of energy, brilliant, dynamic and pervasive like the ocean?

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that in the mantra quoted last, the energy of *Sarasvatī* is also characterised as roaring, *roruvat.* In view of her energy being infinite, etc., this roaring sound associated with *Sarasvatī* can by no means be accounted for in terms of a similar sound produced by waves of the river even though flooded. On the contrary, the reduplicated participial form *roruvat* suggesting thus to the endless continuity of the sound of the infinite quantum of energy bears out its eternal association with the process of creation. The sound produced by waves of the river *Sarasvatī* is just an humble similitude to that sound inherent in the creative process and as represented by goddess *Sarasvatī* as an embodiment of *Vāk.* She is universal *Vāk,* wisdom, knowledge and energy all combined in her. The turbulent oceanic water producing sound continuously and doing so within *Sarasvati's* full awareness of it, as envisioned by seer *Madhucchandas,* also refers to the same cosmic energy operating dynamically, producing sound or *Vāk* eternally and being aware of itself as *Sarasvatī* essentially is.[32]

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29 यस्त्वा देवी सरस्वत्युपब्रूते धने॑ हिते। इन्द्रं॑ न वृत्र॑तूर्ये॑।। *Ibid., VI.61.5*

30 उत स्या नः सर॑स्वती घो॒रा हिर॑ण्यवर्तनिः।
वृत्र॒घ्नी वे॑ष्टि सुष्टु॒तिम्।। *Ibid., VI.61.7*

31 यस्या॑ अन॒न्तो अह॑रुतस्त्वे॒षश्च॑रि॒ष्णुर्ण॒वः।
अम॒श्चर॑ति रोरु॒वत्।। *Ibid., VI.61.8*

32 म॒हो अर्ण॒ः सर॑स्वती॒ प्र चे॑तयति के॒तुना।
धियो॒ विश्वा॒ वि रा॑जति।। *Ibid., I.3.12*

Sarasvati's association with the seven rivers is also very well explicable in the light of the foregoing. In one of *Bharadvāja's* mantras, for instance, she is prayed to take mankind as represented by the seer, or under his leadership beyond the reach of the sense of enmity or envy like she herself going beyond all her sisters or like the sun moving ahead of the days by virtue of operating as per the principle of universal dynamics known as *Ṛta.*[33] The seven sisters of *Sarasvatī* being symbolical of the seven planes of being, she alone as the feeder of them and hence as lying in transcendence of them can take one beyond all sense of enmity and envy, which are necessarily associated with the creation. This sense is further clarified by the simile of the sun, used in the second part of the mantra. Obviously, it is the sun, which is the cause of days as well as of nights. Being the cause of days, it always lies in transcendence of the days. As such, it alone can take us beyond the reach of the days. Similar is the position of *Sarasvati* as visualised by the seer. By virtue of being the cause of the seven planes of being, she alone can take one beyond the reach of the sense of enmity etc.

Sarasvati's close association with *Ṛta* can also be explained properly only on this assumption. *Ṛta* is the principle of universal dynamics responsible for conversion of the Being into the Becoming. Thus the door of *Ṛta* would be the door to the Being. In this perspective can be understood the underlying sense of *Vasiṣṭha's* prayer to *Sarasvatī* claiming to have opened the two planks of the door of *Ṛta* leading to her so that she may manifest herself and impart her energy to her devoteee.[34]

The *Puraṇic* legends associated with *Sarasvati* also suggest to the secondary role of the river in the making of her. To refer to a few of them, according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, once there was a discussion held between *Viṣṇu* on the one hand and *Sarasvatī, Gangā* and *Lakṣmī* on the other. In the heat of the discussion, *Gangā* somehow got enraged and pronounced a curse on *Sarasvatī* to get turned into a river. Obviously, as per this legend, the river *Sarasvatī* has got her name and importance delegated to her from the goddess of that name. The *Brahmāṇda Purāṇa*, on the other hand, presents the same legend in a slightly different but

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33 सा नो विश्वा अति द्विषः स्वसॄरन्या ऋतावरी।
अतन्नहैव सूर्यः।। *Ibid., VI.61.9*

34 अयमु ते सरस्वति वसिष्ठो द्वारावृतस्य सुभगे व्यावः।
वर्ध शुभ्रे स्तुवते रासि वाजान् यूयं पात स्वस्तिभिः सदा नः।। *Ibid., VII.95.6*

a more psychologically precise form. According to it, Brahma at one time made a false statement in the presence of *Siva*, who getting thus annoyed, cursed the former to get his *Vāk* turned into a river, which hence onward began to flow as the river *Sarasvatī*. Both these legends, thus, show how the *Purāṇas* are aware of *Sarasvatī* as a river as well as the goddess though possibly not on the basis of actuality but from their understanding of the Vedic account of *Sarasvatī*, as the river must have had disappeared by the Puranic age. What they have accounted for in terms of the curse, no matter be it pronounced by *Gangā* or *Siva*, is explicable, from the viewpoint taken up by us here, in terms of the seer's necessity to resort to the symbolic form to give expression to the subtle ideas arising out of his deep spiritual experiences.

Experiential Basis of the Symbolic Representation of Sarasvati

We may recollect from the foregoing deliberations that *Sarasvati* really is a matter of experience of the Vedic seers in the state of higher consciousness in which they could have cognisance of the actual building blocks and archetectonics of the colossal structure of the reality lying behind the universe in all its massivity and tangibility. As the seers reached that essential point of cognisance having traversed the thick and thins of the universe psychically and spiritually, they in the expression of their supernal experiences could not but take resort to what stood around them to be used as tentative similitudes of those experiences. A direct inkling into this phenomenon of higher experience and its symbolic representation can be had from a consideration over the famous *Vāgāmbhṛṇī* Hymn of the *Ṛgveda*.

Ambhṛṇa was possibly a Rgvedic seer though unfortunately none of the mantras seen by him has come down to us. Even then, however, he survives very well on account of his daughter known as *Vāk*. Though survived by only one hymn of eight mantras, she stands out as one of the greatest seers of the Vedic age. She is called *Āmbhṛṇī* on account of her father *Ambhṛṇa*. Her basic name *Vāk* seems to be a secondary one given to her subsequently on account of her realisation of identity with *Vāk*, the goddess of Word, which obviously is *Sarasvatī*. The experience of her identity with the goddess cannot but be extremely spiritual involving total merger of her human individuality into the Divine. As such, it could very well be delighted in psychically, secretly and silently. But, instead of it, what we find is that she describes herself in a way as if *Sarasvati* were giving an account of her active role in the dynamics of the universe as well as of the beyond. This she does not in any abstract way but concretely and tangibly. For making the experiences tangible, she uses a host of imagery drawn particularly from various components and processes involved in the constitution of the cosmos. As a result of this mode of expression, it appears as if *Sarasvatī* herself were speaking instead of the daughter of *Ambhṛṇa*, though really it is the inmost experiences of the latter herself which are given expression here in the highest state of secrecy and seclusion of the human mind after reaching the point of complete withdrawal from the actuality of the world and having got entry into an altogether different dimension of the reality where the actualities of this world get reduced to mere functions of indications, signs and symbols of what is to be experienced in the novel context.

Though actually a human, she talks of herself in the very opening mantra of the hymn as if she was moving in the company of all the gods including the *Rudras*, the *Vasus* and the *Ādityas*, which three groups of deities along with *Prajāpati* exhaust the total list of Vedic gods. Even then, however, she further mentions in the same continuation *Viśve Devāh, Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni* and the two *Aśvins* also.[1] Out of these groups of gods, the *Vasus* are associated with the earth, the *Rudras* with the intermediate space and the *Ādityas* with the heaven. As such, the movement of *Vāk* with all these gods put together is indicative of her pervasion of the three sections of the world. If the idea underlying this statement were to be expressed in an abstract way, it could easily be stated in the form that *Vāk* is all-pervading. But instead of stating summarily like this, if *Āmbhṛṇī* has preferred the other mode of expression, that must partly be due to the background of her approach and partly owing to the relatively far more effectiveness of the graphic as compared to the abstractive. As regards the background of the seer's approach, she had before her a multitude of gods and goddesses associated with various phenomena of nature or the sections and functions of the universe as visualised by the seers and believed in and worshipped by the people. While the common man prayed to these gods as independent of himself and as benefactors of him and the seers visualised them as entities inherent in themselves and worth invoking and enlarging, *Āmbhṛṇī* going a step further actually experienced as if she was moving in their company since she had dived deep within herself and had come to stir these archetypal beings from within her psyche. Unlike the abstractive philosopher reasoning by conjectures and inferences, she had waded through the depth of the psyche or spiritual being and having thus got free of the hold of the ego on her she felt as if she was practically moving with these entities lying at the root of the universal process and controlling the latter from behind what is tangible to us. While abstraction is the way of the reasoning mind, getting coincided with the object of cognisance is the way of the psyche. Having got coincided with these agencies of cosmic dimension with the involvement of the deeper layers of her psyche, it was but natural for her to give expression to her ideas in terms of them rather than in terms of the abstractive mind.

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1 अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः।
अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा।। *RV.X.125.1*

While her movement with the *Vasus, Rudras* and *Ādityas* is suggestive of her all-pervasiveness, her experience of bearing *Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni* and the *Aśvins* in her indicates to her sense of motherliness towards them. At the same time it is important to note that these latter gods are no way exclusive of the three groups of gods known as *Vasus, Rudras* and *Ādityas*. Indeed while *Agni* is one or rather the chief of the *Vasus*, *Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa* and the *Aśvins* are the leading ones among the *Ādityas*. It is just incidentally that none of the *Rudras* has been mentioned among the gods borne by *Vāk*. That was rather difficult also, since although numbering eleven, none of the *Rudras* is known by his personal name. On account of this anonymity of them, they at their best would have required to be mentioned again in collectivity and that would have been a sheer repetition. In this way the seer's intention here is to point out that the gods with whom she claims to move are exactly the same as those whom she bears within her. Thus her all-pervasiveness is due to her serving as the cause of everything, including the gods. In this way, there is obvious equivalence in the eye of the seer between serving as the cause and moving in the company of. This equivalence is perfectly true particularly in regard to the material cause, since the latter always accompanies its effect. By virtue of serving as the cause of the gods as also accompanying them, *Vāk* proves herself to be the whole cause of everything including the material. This abstruse point has been made out here by the seer through the symbol of the mother bearing as well as accompanying her children throughout.

The next mantra develops the above idea further onwards. In it *Āmbhṛṇī* observes that it is she who bears in her *Soma* used for pressing and squeezing as well as *Tvastṛ, Pūṣaṇ* and *Bhaga* besides imparting wealth to the squeezing, worshipful and oblation-bearing sacrificer.[2] There is an obvious contrariety of function between *Agni* and *Soma*. *Agni* is the consumer while *Soma* is the object consumed. While in the previous mantra *Āmbhṛṇī* claims to bear within herself and move along with *Agni*, in the present mantra she observes that she bears within her equally *Soma* also, which is to be crushed, pressed and squeezed for being offered to the fire. This claim on her part bears out her all-comprehensiveness in transcendence of the contrarieties of the world of actuality. Thus *via Āmbhṛṇī's* experience, *Vāk* proves to be the consumer as well as the object consumed. In terms of the *Upaniṣads*, she is the food as well as the

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2 अहं सोममाहनसं बिभर्म्यहं त्वष्टारमुत पूषणं भगम्।
अहं दधामि द्रविणं हविष्मते सुप्राव्येऽयजमानाय सुन्वते।। *Ibid.,X.125.2*

eater and thus equivalent to *Aditi*, who is the source as well as the final consumer of the world. As a matter of fact, the world is said in the *Brāhmaṇas* to be the result of interaction between *Agni* and *Soma*. By virtue of bearing both these components of the universe within her, *Vāk* automatically becomes the primeval cause of it.

If *Agni* and *Soma* form the stuff of creation, *Tvastṛ* is the architect of the mansion of creation. In the sweep of her all-comprehensiveness, *Vāk* claims to bear within herself both the architects as well as the material used in the massive construction of the universe. *Pūṣaṇ* is the god of nourishment and maintenance while *Bhaga* is the divine agency of equitable distribution of the means of sustenance in the universe. Ascription of the motherhood of *Tvastṛ, Pūṣaṇ* and *Bhaga*, besides that of *Agni* and *Soma*, to *Vāk*, suggests to the pivotal role Vāk plays in supplying the stuff, structuring, maintaining and diversifying the universe in all its massivity. She does all this not as an agency extraneous to the universe but as one fully involved in all this by supplying the stuff of creation out of herself as well as by providing for the agencies of construction, maintenance and distribution.

The universe is no less a conglomeration of individuals than being universal. *Vāk's* role in the maintenance of the universe from the individual's viewpoint is indicated in the latter half of this mantra. Here *Vāk* claims to carry with her the wealth that a sacrificer deserves to be bestowed upon by virtue of his devotion to the Divine brought out concretely in the form of squeezing of *Soma* and offering of oblations. The individual in himself is a small and insignificant speck as compared to the enormous massivity of the universe comprising infinitely innumerable individuals besides its all-comprehending universality. As such, it looks rather impossible for the universal to take care of the individual in all his innumerability and equally innumerable particularities of each one of them. How can it be possible, *prima facie*, for the inestimably massive mechanism of the universe to take care of the petty feelings and aspirations of the individuals? *Āmbhṛṇī's* realisation, however, not only indicates to this possibility but also proves practically its verity by bringing the daughter of the seer to the state of cognisance where she experiences herself as one with the ultimate cause of the totality. This idea is brought home symbolically here through *Vāk's* statement that she herself is the bestower of wealth to the sacrificer. Offering of oblation and squeezing of *Soma* are indeed symbolic acts of one's devotion to the Divine, which represents the totality of the universe in its self-

consciousness as well as transcendence. Devotion to the Divine of this sort is indicative of the enlargement of personality the devotee has undergone. As such, it is but natural for him to be rewarded duly by the Divine as represented by *Vāk* as coming to the realisation of *Āmbhṛṇī*.

The third mantra makes use of another set of symbols to bring out the role of *Vāk* in the management of the world. Supposing the latter as a vast territory, it has got to be ruled by a central agency drawing taxes from the public and making best use of the money thus collected in the interest of the tax-payer. This idea is brought out in this mantra through the pronouncement of *Vāk* as the ruler of the world, *Rāṣṭrī*. As the king of a kingdom collects taxes from the inhabitants of his empire, even so *Vāk* claims to have at her disposal a rich treasure for the running of her government. This wealth, however, comes to her not by way of exacting but through spontaneous offering, which is known as sacrifice. This arrangement of spontaneous offering to the treasury of the divine ruler she claims to have made with the application of her great wisdom. By virtue of her wisdom and its due application in the governance, she has made herself deserve most in sharing the offerings made in course of sacrifices. On account of her sovereign presence everywhere, she is supposed to have been placed everywhere by gods serving as her ruling agents. Thus, though only one, she has come to have her placings everywhere simultaneously and hence she can be taken to have made her entry into those dwellings.[3]

Thus we see how the symbol of kingship has been used here to indicate to the manner the Supernal manages the affairs of the world. Indeed by way of using this symbol, *Āmbhṛṇī* has brought down to us one of the most vivid accounts of actual governance during the Vedic period. It is evident from her statement that the king those days was known by a certain form of the word *rāṣṭrī* as appropriate to him. He was expected to be a man of profound wisdom excelling all others. By the application of this wisdom, he made his presence felt everywhere. He delegated his power to his deputies placed in different areas of his kingdom. Their presence in the respective places represented the presence of the sovereign ruler himself in those places and practically in the entire territory under his control. Payment of taxes by the people was a spontaneous affair, and the money thus collected was used by the Sovereign primarily for the welfare of the people.

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3 अहं राष्ट्री सङ्गमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानाम्।
तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा भूरिस्थात्रां भूर्यावेशयन्तीम्।। *Ibid.,X.125.3*

From under the veil of this symbol what *Āmbhṛṇī* really intends to communicate is that *Vāk* is not only the source of creation but is also the principle of its sustenance. The principle of sustenance is based on the act of reciprocity of give and take. If *Vāk* projects herself in all and sundry forms of the universe, it is imperative on those forms to respond suitably to her feelings behind those projections. If the responses are positive, the Divine in the garb of *Vāk* would reward suitably the form concerned. If, on the other hand, it is negative, the result would be disastrous for its source. Thus the world is an organised entity with the Divine having an eye over each and every particular individual, object and event in it. The Divine controls every particular here not by sitting at a distance but by indwelling it, no matter be it static or dynamic.

The next mantra brings out the difference between the consequences of the positive and the negative responses to the presence of the Divine as a whole as well as in particulars. To quote the statement of *Vāk*: "*He who sees, breaths and listens to what is told to him, gets his food through me. Those who do not admit my existence, meet destruction. This, O listener, listen to me; I am telling it to you since you are faithful to me.* "[4] Obviously taking food and breathing are symbolic of sustained existence and organic growth while seeing and hearing are indicative of doing so with the use of the capacities of perceiving and getting knowledge through verbal communication. From amidst these four capacities, breathing, taking food and seeing serve as means to the task of hearing signifying verbal communication, which *Vāk* represents as its divine custodian. Thus, it is on her initiative that the inorganic existence grows into the organic and develops the capacity of taking food, perceiving things and communicating its experiences through language. Linguistic development through gradual refinement has the promise of leading one to fulfilment in the experience of his oneness with the divine *Vāk,* as the case of *Āmbhṛṇī* herself exemplifies. On the other hand, those, who do not admit of the existence of *Vāk*, are destined to get perished, since by this action of theirs they cut themselves off from the basis of their existence and sustenance. By virtue of serving as the basis of the acts of breathing, seeing and hearing, *Vāk* indicates herself to be the basis of life and sensory functions, that is the principles of vitality and consciousness. While breathing is symbolic of living over and above existing, seeing and hearing symbolise all sensory

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4 मया सो अन्नमत्ति यो विपश्यति यः प्राणिति य ई श्रुणोत्युक्तम्।
अमन्तवो मां त उप क्षियन्ति श्रुधि श्रुत श्रद्धिवं ते वदामि।। *Ibid.X.125.4*

functions including touching, smelling and tasting besides seeing and hearing, as is the usual way of expression found in the Vedic literature. The basis of these functions having denied, one loses the ground of one's living and behaving consciously over and above his sense of sheer existing.

The next mantra takes the idea of *Vāk* to a still higher gradient. To translate her observation made in this mantra: "*I am saying all this by myself which is enjoyed by gods and humans both. Whomsoever I wish to empower, I empower him, no matter he be the creator, seer or the man of wisdom.*"[5] While in the previous mantra, *Vāk's* serving as the basis of the vital and the sensory including the mental was brought to light, in this mantra she claims to be responsible for still higher functions which may collectively be termed as supramental. They include the acts of the seer, of the preserver of the mantras as also of the supremely wise. *Vāk* identifies herself with the source of the power by virtue of which anyone becomes a seer, preserver of mantras and possessed of supramental wisdom and dear to both the gods and the humans. Her claim to be responsible for all these higher functions bears her out as the agency of self-consciousness lying at the root of all higher wisdom particularly that of the Vedic variety where the objective and the subjective both get coincided in one principle of self-consciousness. As a matter of fact, in our commonsense experience, consciousness needs something besides itself to be conscious of creating thus a rupture in the reality with the consequence of its division into the subject and the object. It is in the Vedic wisdom that this rupture gets removed through the discovery of the principle of reunification lying in self-consciousness where the Self itself plays the role of both the seer and the object of seeing. This is what *Āmbhṛṇī* having reached that highest state of self-realisation points to by her observation that whatever is being uttered here is indeed the utterance of *Vāk* herself and not that of any particular individual be it *Āmbhṛṇī* . This has been made possible owing to the latter having discovered her essence in *Vāk*. When *Vāk* gets manifested herself through any medium other than herself, that is not so cherishable as are the words uttered directly by *Vāk*. This latter state of things *Āmbhṛṇī* herself creates by the intensity of self-realisation culminating in her coincidence with *Vāk*. The utterances of this state of self-realisation form the ground of communication between the seers and the gods. Here the seer serves as the subject while the god

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5 अहमेव स्वयमिदं वदामि जुष्टं देवेभिरुत मानुषेभिः।
यं कामये तं तमुग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम्।। *Ibid.,X.125.5*

as the object and both at the acme of self-realisation get evevtually coincided. It is at this point of coincidence that *Vāk* is experienced as the source of empowerment of both, the seer and the god. This experience ultimately serves as the source of the supernal wisdom as embodied in sages.

The last three substantives, *i.e.*, *Brāhmaṇam, ṛṣim* and sumedhām compress in them the essential stuff of the Puranic symbolism of *Brhama* producing the four Vedas out of his as many mouths, the seven seers as his spiritual sons receiving it and making it possible for the later sages to get enlightened by it. The basic content at the root of all this figurative as well as historic development is the fact of self-realisation where the seer experiences himself or herself as *Vāk* itself, as does *Āmbhṛṇī*, for instance.

The next mantra partly illustrates the basic idea of the foregoing mantra and partly reveals the background against which the above has been structured. To translate it: *"I stretch the bow for Rudra for the sake of killing Śaru, the hater of Brahman, the supernal wisdom. For the sake of the people I wage war and (it is for this purpose that) I have come to enter in the midst of the heaven and the earth."*[6] While in the previous mantra the idea of the positive liking of *Vāk* in favour of gods and humans besides that of empowering them has been expressed, in this mantra the purpose behind doing so as well as her action taken in this regard has been made out. It is interesting to note at the outset that the mode of operation *Vāk* reveals to have adopted herself is mostly indirect. She just empowers gods and men and stretches the bow of *Rudra* rather than target anyone by herself. It shows that *Āmbhṛṇī 's* realisation of *Vāk* concerns specifically the basic force working behind the beings and actions of gods and the experiences of seers. Her vision has been captured and sought to be accounted for psychologically rather than mythologically. Even then, however, the seer could not but take recourse to certain mythological images necessarily. It positively confirms our viewpoint that the seers' approach in the Vedic composition is primarily psychological and only secondarily mythological. Herein lies the justification for the procedure adopted by us to wade through the array of symbols and try to capture the central point of experience the seers had got and to see how that

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6 अहं रुद्राय धनुरातनोमि ब्रह्मद्विषे शरवे हन्तवा उ।
अहं जनाय समदं कृणोम्यहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश।। *Ibid.,X.125.6*

experience has been clothed in tangible images for the sake of convenient understanding of the posterity. This is very much evident in these mantras as seen by *Āmbhṛṇī*. First of all, she experiences *Vāk* as the supernal force not only lying but also actively operating behind the actions of gods and visions of seers, and then proceeds to reveal through tangible images as also through mythological references the mode of her operation.

Thus, stretching the bow of *Rudra* by her is illustrative of herself operating as the real force behind the action of *Rudra* or indeed behind that of all other gods. Indeed it is particularly due to this pertinent reference that this hymn has been most favourite with the *Śāktas* and *Tāntrikas*. The purpose behind doing so on behalf of *Vāk*, as stated in the mantra, is to kill *Śaru*. The basic crime for which he is sought to be killed by *Vāk* is that he is the hater of *Brahman*, the supernal wisdom. Thus it is evident that *Vāk* serves not only as the source of wisdom but also as the guardian of it particularly in the form it has descended in the world of actuality. As is evident from the derivation of the word *Śaru* from the root *sṛ*, to crush, the demon, sought to be killed by *Vāk* through *Rudra*, is simply the agency of destruction working behind the spread and continuance of the wisdom. This wisdom obviously is the Vedic while *Śaru* represents the force working against the prevalence of this wisdom.

In view of above, the statement of *Vāk* to the effect that she wages war in the interest of the people does not refer to any actual war as has been misunderstood by upholders of the theory of Āryan Invasion, but to the struggle going on perpetually and universally between the good and the bad in the very fabric of existence particularly as woven in the human nature. Had this struggle not been there, *Vāk* of the Vedic variety would not have taken the trouble of coming down to the horizon formed by the polarity of the heaven and the earth.

The idea of descent of *Vāk* to the horizon has further been developed in the next mantra by specifying the locale of her descent as well as the mode of operation in the world where she has descended. To translate the mantra: *"I have given birth to the Father at the head of all that is there while my original source lies in the waters inside the sea. It is from there that I make myself spread over all the created worlds besides touching that yonder heaven with my forehead."*[7]

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7 अहं सुवे पितरमस्य मूर्धन् मम योनिरप्स्वन्तः समुद्रे।
ततो वितिष्ठे भुवनानु विश्वोतामूं द्यां वर्ष्मणोपस्पृशामि।। *Ibid.,X.125.7*

Pitaram obviously stands for the Creator. The claim of *Vāk* to have given birth to the Creator looks strange outside the Vedic milieu but is quite germane to it. It is cognate to *Laukya Bṛhaspati's* observation in the famous *Hymn to Devāḥ* to the effect that *Dakṣa* was born of *Aditi* and *Aditi* was born of *Dakṣa.*[8] This is the symbolic way of stating that the question of origin of the being at the apex is rather inexplicable. If that inexplicability of the Ultimate has been brought out through the peculiar proposition of birth of *Aditi* and *Dakṣa* from each other in the vision of *Laukya Bṛhaspati*, here in *Vāgāmbhṛṇī's* hymn it has been indicated through the origin of *Vāk* in the depth of the sea, *antaḥ samudre.* The sea has been used here as a symbol of mystery. This is evident from the reversed polarity of the cause and effect of *Vāk* in the form of the depth of the sea and the height of the heaven. If she creates the Father at the apex of all that is there, she naturally ought to have had her origin in a state of things still higher than the heaven, since in the Veda, as well as elsewhere, the more fundamental the reality, the higher the place it has been assigned to. But, contrary to it, the origin of *Vāk* is said here to lie in the depth of the sea, which obviously extends downward. It is also suggested through this inversion of the location of the cause and the effect that coming to the ultimate point in regard to the gradation of the reality, the spatial and the temporal relationships lose their respective grounds. While birth of *Aditi* from *Dakṣa* and that of *Dakṣa* from *Aditi* bears out the violation of the law of temporal sequence, the reversal in the location of the cause and the effect of *Vāk* is spatial.

It is from that original position that *Vāk*, as she observes, has descended down to the multitude of creations and thus has diversified her unitary being. Though thus all-pervading, she, however, claims for herself to touch closely the heaven by her forehead. This last act of hers is symbolic of the continuance of her unitary position notwithstanding her pervasion of the universe in diverse forms. Thus, in the vision of the seer, *Vāk* is one as well as many. She is many in view of her forms of articulation while she is one in view of her being the possibility of articulation in the unitary consciousness.

In the last mantra of the hymn, she observes: "*It is I myself who blows like the wind creating all the creations. Beyond the heaven as also beyond this earth do I lie by having expanded myself to this extent.*"[9]

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8 अदितेर्दक्षो अजायत दक्षाद्वदितिः परि। *Ibid.,X.72.4*

9 अहमेव वात इव प्र वाम्यारभमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा।
परो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्यैतावती महिना सं बभूव।। *Ibid.,X.125.8*

Here *Vāk* points to the mode of her movement by comparing it with that of the wind. The simile of the wind used in this connection has a twofold suggestion to make. In the first place, it refers to the fact that *Vāk* has a certain sort of dynamism associated with her. That dynamism of hers is owing to her being basically of the nature of force or indeed force itself. It is so fundamental as to be responsible for the creation of the world. It thus vindicates the position taken up earlier in the hymn by the statement of *Vāk* that it is she who stretches the bow for *Rudra* suggesting thereby that she is the power behind him or figuratively speaking she is his consort, the *Śakti* and by no means merely the power of articulation working in the vocal organ of the humans or even other organic bodies. Indeed the creativity assigned to *Vāk* here is of the same nature as is involved in the famous Upaniṣadic statement that all the modifications upon the Reality have been brought by *Vāk*.[10] On the basis of the use of the word *ārambhaṇa* precisely with reference to the function of *Vāk*, it can fairly well be inferred that the Upaniṣadic sage *Āruṇi* had before him particularly this Rgvedic mantra in which the entire creativity of the world has been attributed to the dynamism of *Vāk*.

Secondly the comparison of the dynamism of *Vāk* with the movement of wind also suggests the intimate relationship of sound with air in the vocal organ of organic bodies.

It is by virtue of this dynamism, observes *Vāk*, that she extends herself everywhere and even beyond the human imagination such as what lies above the heaven and below the earth. This is the Vedic way of referring to what is unimaginable.

Since *Sarasvatī* is a figurative representation of *Vāk* in all her eternal stasis and universal dynamism, this whole account can very well be attributed to her also. If *Vāk* stretches the bow for *Rudra*, *Sarasvati* makes the water of *Sarasvān* flow down in her bed. It is the dynamism of *Vāk* which has obliged seers to take recourse to the imagery of the particular river to give it a concrete form. The claim of *Vāk* to empower the Brahmana, the seer and the sagacious in this hymn has helped further in making *Sarasvatī* pointedly associated with language, learning and wisdom.

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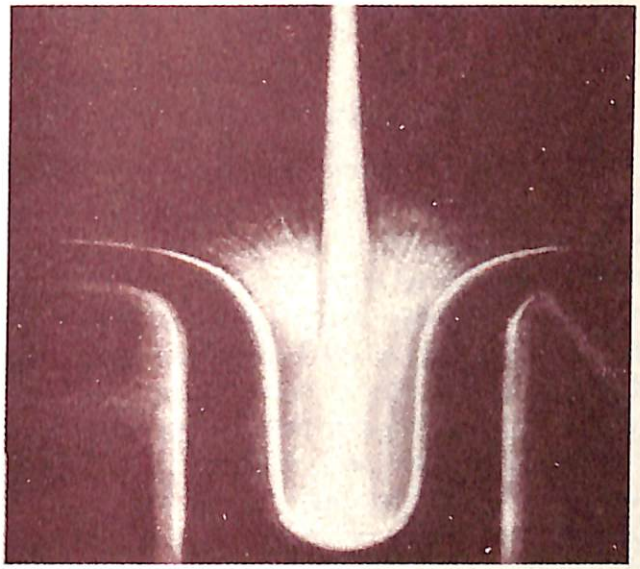
10 वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयम्। *Ch.Up.VI.1.4*



Pranava

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Prima facie the word *praṇava* is a simple one. It is formed out of the root *nu*, to pray, with the addition of the prefix *pra* and the suffix *ap* and thus denotes the state or means of intense prayer. Prayer, as we normally understand by it, is in the form of words addressed to a certain being higher in stature and supposed to be responsive to the words of prayer. But, as distinct from other cultural milieus, in the Vedic tradition it does by no means end here. In this tradition, since prayer is the means not of just appeasement of the being it is addressed to but that of restoration of the source of the prayer to the addressee of it, it has every likelihood of getting gradually so intensified and substantiated as to get almost coincided with that being. If the source of prayer has the likelihood of getting his identity established with the object of the prayer by shedding off gradually all sense of difference, the prayer, by virtue of serving as the interconnecting link between both the beings has obviously a still greater probability of that sort of coincidence. The only precondition in this regard is that the prayer should have emerged out of the deepest core of the human psyche. This indeed is the secret behind the idea of divine origin of the Vedic mantras.

Keeping this point in mind, when we take the case of *Praṇava* under consideration, what we find special about it is its pinpointed brevity. In fact, wherever there is mankind, there is prayer. Most of these prayers are addressed to humans themselves, both living and dead. The rest refer to divine beings. As there are grades amongst the divine beings themselves, the higher the being addressed to, the higher the prayer said in his praise. In the process of graded ascension, that prayer would be the highest and the best which would refer to the highest Being in the most condensed form. With all their deepest prayerfulness and seeing of prayers in the form of mantras, Vedic seers have unanimously come to concur on *Praṇava* as the best one of all the prayers and have identified it in the form of *Om*.

The long course of search involved in the discovery of *Om* as *Praṇava* or the best of prayers is evident from a passage occurring in the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*. Being afraid of death, the passage tells us, gods entered into the three Vedas taking them collectively and covered themselves with the metre used there. It is due to the metre having served as the cover of gods in this instance, that it has come to acquire the name *chandas*, cover, the

Upaniṣad tells us. But the gods did not feel safe lying in the metre either, since they were visible to Death there also like the fish inside clear water. Being thus afraid of Death inside the metre, the gods managed to enter into that sound which is common to all the Vedas and is most universal. That sound has been pointed out by the Upaniṣadic sage as *Om.*[1] Its universality lies in representing all the vowel sounds without the help of which consonants cannot be uttered at all. Had the vowels not been there, any *Vāk*, speech or language would have been an impossibility. Since *Vāk* represents the basic creative impulse behind the creation of the world right in the ontological sense, the absence of vowel would obviously have been the point of non-start of the creative activity on the part of the Creator. In this way, vowel is the ultimate ingredient of creation and hence it is regarded as indestructible, *akṣara*. If consonants also came to be known as *akṣara*, that was due to vowels being inevitably associated with them.

Among vowels also, *a* and *u*, as combined in the formation of the sound *o* in *Om*, are most representative owing to be associated with both the extremes of the vocal organ insofar as the pronunciation of the vowels is concerned. *a* is guttural while *u* is palatal. All vowels are pronounced just from the midst of these two points of articulation. The vowel *o* itself is formed out of a combination of *a* and *u*. Thus by virtue of having involved in its pronunciation the entire vocal organ of vocalic sounds, *o* is taken to represent all the vowels together. The rest of the vocal organ, that is the pair of lips, is covered by the labial and nasal *m*. In this way, the word *Om* is the most fundamental and comprehensive sound utterable by the human vocal organ. Since all other sounds both vocalic and non-vocalic are included in it, it is regarded as the basis of all of them and hence the most representative. As the Veda or indeed the entire literary creation of mankind has been created out of these sounds serving as the building blocks, they have been taken by the Upaniṣadic sage as the stuff of immortality behind all of them. The Vedas are immortal on account of having the immortal gods as their subject matter and *via* them the prayer

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1 देवा वै मृत्योर्बिभ्यतस्त्रयीं विद्यां प्राविशंस्ते छन्दोभिरच्छादयन्।
यदेभिरच्छादयंतच्छन्दसां छन्दस्त्वम्। तानु तत्र मृत्युर्यथा मत्स्यमुदके परिपश्येदेवं
पर्यपश्यदृचि साम्नि यजुषि। ते नु वित्वोर्ध्वा ऋचः साम्नो यजुषः स्वरमेव प्राविशन्।
यदा वा ऋचमाप्नोत्योमित्येवातिस्वरत्येवं सामैवं यजुरेष उ स्वरो यदेरदक्षरमेतदमृतमभयं
तत्प्रविश्य देवा अमृता अभया अभवन्।। *Ch.Up.I.4.2-4*

to the Supreme Being. But, on account of their voluminousness, they are also vulnerable to the principle of mortality. Their vulnerability presents a kindred threat to gods indwelling them, as the *Upaniṣad* puts it. This is why they manage to enter into such a stuff which is the condensed essence of all the Vedas or indeed of all combinations and creations possible out of coalescing of vocalic and non-vocalic sounds. That basic stuff is the sound *Om*, the articulate form of *Praṇava*, the intensest possible prayer. While extensity is vulnerable to mortality, intensity is immune to it. This is what gods had in their mind while preferring *Praṇava* to the Vedas as their shelter from the principle of mortality.

Involvement of the sound *Om* in the creation of the world has been explained by the *Upaniṣad* deductively also. It traces the origin of all beings on this earth to the earth itself. At the next step it moves to water as the source of the earth, the latter being the solidified form of water. This is why in the Veda water has so often been regarded as the original stuff of creation. Having gone back to water as the original stuff of creation, the Upaniṣadic sage proceeds further to explain the origin of *Om*. According to the scheme of things envisaged by him, water, as involved in the formation of earth, gives rise to vegetations as its essence. It is out of the vegetations that eventually in the process of evolution man comes into being and produces *Vāk* as the essence of his being, as it is the pre-eminently main means of his self-expression. Having evolved *Vāk* out of himself, he brought out the Rgvedic mantras as the most essential creation out of that *Vāk*. Being a selection of the Rgvedic mantras owing to their better musical form, the *Sāman* mantras are regarded by the sage as the essence of the Rgvedic mantras. It was in course of musical recitation of these selected mantras that the sages came upon the idea of *Om* as the essence of the *Sāman* mantras themselves, as the *Upaniṣad* visualises it. This is evident from the denomination of *Om* as *Udgītha*, the highest or the most essential stuff of music.[2] Thus, in view of the seer, if abstractions were to be made out of the tangible reality around us, the sound *Om* would emerge as the eighth and last one in the process of abstraction of the essence. This is why it is characterised by him as the essence of all the essences and hence the best and ultimate one in the whole series of abstracted essences.[3]

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2 एषां भूतानां पृथिवी रसः। पृथिव्या आपो रसः। अपामोषधयो रसः। ओषधीनां पुरुषो रसः। पुरुषस्य वाग् रसः। वाच ऋगसः। ऋचः साम रसः। साम्न उदगीथो रसः। *Ibid.,I.1.2*

3 स एष रसानां रसतमः परमः परार्ध्योऽष्टमो यदुद्गीथः। *Ibid.,I.1.3*

In this symbolism of *Praṇava*, the word *rasa* has been used in the sense of essence, which is supposed not to be the product of the thing it is abstracted from but the very stuff by virtue of whose inherence in the thing concerned the latter remains what it is. Thus, while earth serves as the basis of the existence of all whatever exists on it, water serves as the basis of the existence of the earth itself. By the application of the same logic, when we regress to *Om*, what we are obliged to conclude is that the latter inheres in everything as its essence or ultimate basis of existence.

The discovery of *Om* as the essence of the cosmos has been supplemented by the discovery of the same as the essence of the principle of life on the individual scale also. This is evident from another story narrated in the same *Upaniṣad*. Gods and demons, the *Upaniṣad* tells us, had their common parentage in *Prajāpati* and yet they engaged themselves in fighting against each other. In this fight against the demons, the gods relied upon *Udgītha* as the weapon. *Udgītha* is basically the function of the priest known as *Udgātṛ* who recites chants on selected mantras. Since *Om* is the basic sound of his chants to which, therefore, he returns again and again in course of his chanting, it has come to be called *Udgītha*. Demons indeed are the principle of discordance bent upon disturbing the harmony of creation as well as of recitation and chants. Apprehension of disturbance likely to be created by demons in the chants, therefore, was rightly contemplated to be removed by gods by sticking to the syllable *Om* not only in frequent return to it but also in using it as the basic rhythm of the chant. In this way, they identified the nasal breath as *Udgītha* in the form of the sound *Om* but not before long they realised that the nasal breath was vulnerable to attack by the demons. This is evident from the smell of both the good and the bad by the nasal breath. The polarity of these smells creates disharmony in the harmonious state of things and hence it is obnoxious and devilish. Gods then moved to *Vāk* to meditate on it as *Udgītha*. On this, the demons began to afflict their *Vāk* also which is evident from mankind being both true and untrue in his speech. Then the gods moved further to eyesight as the basis of contemplation on *Udgītha* as the ultimate state of harmony immune to the reach of demons. But gods very soon came to realise that this was also not the proper venue since it too was vulnerable to the devilish operation of demons. This is evident from the common man seeing both what deserves to be seen and what does not deserve to be seen. Then they shifted to the organ of hearing as venue of meditation on *Udgītha*. But there also they had the sad experience that it too was not safe since it was vulnerable to the evil design of demons, as is evident from the common man hearing both what

is pleasant to ears as also what is unpleasant to them. Then they turned to *Manas* or mind in their search for the proper venue for meditation on *Udgītha*. *Manas* also, however, got afflicted by demons, as is evident from the common man getting his mind attracted by what deserves attention as also what does not deserve to be attended to.

Gods in their search turned eventually to the principal breath passing through mouth and meditated on *Udgītha via* this venue. The result was that the demons got shattered like lumps of clay having stricken against a hard rock. The mightiness of this breath is evident from its serving as the feeder of all other organs. It indeed is the receptacle of life, as is evident from the passing away of the vital breath *via* mouth resulting in the demise of the person concerned.[4]

In this connection, the *Upaniṣad* happens to mention an important historical fact regarding meditation on *Udgītha*. It observes that the celebrated seer *Aṅgiras* meditated on *Udgītha* by taking resort to the vital breath, and that it is particularly why he is called *Aṅgiras*, which literally means `the essence of the organs of body.[5] This observation of the Upaniṣadic sage is highly significant, though made just incidentally. It gives us an inkling into the *sādhanā* of the Vedic seers of the primeval stage, which *Aṅgiras* belongs to, as is evident from his having become a legend even during the Rgvedic time itself. According to this passage, *Aṅgiras* acquired his Vedic knowledge and saw mantras through deep meditation on the sacred syllable *Om* by chanting it melodiously and constantly by means of his principal breath passing through mouth. He indeed did all this, the passage obviously suggests, so attentively and rigorously as to turn his principal breath as a bearer of the syllable *Om* alone. This state of things must have been kept continued for all the twenty-four hours resulting in his having become just the mouth-piece of *Praṇava*. It was understandably owing to this rigour on *Praṇava* that he became a seer of his unique stature as also got accorded to him this significant name secondarily on account of his singular accomplishment. This is equally true of his son *Ayāsya* also, as per the observation of the Upaniṣadic sage. According to him, the son of *Aṅgiras* is called *Ayāsya* because he meditated on *Praṇava* by taking resort to the vital breath passing through mouth.[6] Just like his father, he too seems to have been given this name secondarily.

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4 *Ibid.,I.2.1--8*

5 तं हाङ्गिरा उद्गीथमुपासाञ्च॒क एतमु एवाङ्गिरसं मन्यन्तेऽङ्गानां य॒दसः। *Ibid.,I.2.10*

6 तेन तं हायास्य उद्गीथमुपासाञ्च॒क एतमु एवायास्यं मन्यन्त आस्याद्यदयते। *Ibid.,I.2.12*

To reflect on the meaning this legend may be supposed to communicate, it is certain that *Udgītha, Praṇava* and *Om* have been used here as synonyms. While *Om* indicates to the particular sound that was discovered by Vedic seers as the most primeval one and as the verbal form of the Reality realised at the apex of all whatever there is perceptible and conceivable, *Udgītha* refers to the method by which this discovery was made, and *Praṇava* to the psychology behind the method as well as the accomplishment. Vedic seers were a highly motivated and adventurous people. The main thrust of their motivation was the search for the Reality. The main tool they used for this objective was their individual personality, rather than anything lying outside. If they happened to make use of anything external to them as a tool in this search, that was only as an accessory. In the human personality that was there at their immediate disposal, they brooded over the probable efficacy of various sense organs in this regard. As per the legend under consideration, the search started with the breath passing through the nose, which obviously is symbolic of the sense of smell. The question is how far we can know the Reality through this sense. The answer is obvious. We can know the Reality through this sense no doubt, but only scantily. Moreover, whatever is known through this sense, can in no case be absolute in itself, no matter even scantily. For, whatever is sensed through this organ is always infested with the sense of good and bad which creates an inevitable dichotomy in the Reality. Any dichotomous reality cannot be absolute which has to be the necessary attribute of any reality put to the test of the really real. Gods and demons both represent only the dichotomous state of the Reality, neither of them being absolute in himself. They stand for the good and the bad aspects of the Reality respectively and hence are required to remain always engaged in fighting against each other. The absolute Reality is expected to be characterised by absolute harmony rather than be infested with infighting.

The sense of smell operates through touch. More or less, so is the case with other senses also. But while touch is tangible in case of the sense of smell, touch and taste, it is apparently at least intangible in case of the senses of seeing and hearing. It is probably due to this distinction between the two groups of the sense organs that the Upaniṣadic sage skips over the senses of touch and taste in his account of the search for the Reality through various means man has been provided with in his personality as a living laboratory.

Next the sage refers to *Vāk* as venue of the *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* used by gods. Here by *Vāk*, the sage understandably means the articulate form of speech, which is produced with the help of the vocal organ. Meditation on *Praṇava* through the articulated *Vāk* implies use of speech as such in the form of language. Now the question is whether the Reality can be understood experientially through language or not. The Upaniṣadic sage's answer is in the negative. In his perception, man is prone to speak true and false both. This observation may reasonably be extended to all articulate linguistic forms including the spoken and the written both. In view of the sage, this is so because *Vāk* or the articulate language is vulnerable to attack by demons. While gods are given to promotion of truth, demons engage themselves in the furtherance of falsehood, which obviously is criminal. Language is the product of speech, while speech is the product of the vocal organ. Being vulnerable to demonic forces, the vocal organ cannot be free of falsehood. As such, gods could not succeed in their quest for the Reality through meditation on *Praṇava* by using the vocal organ as venue.

Next they moved to eye and ear successively. Needless to point out that eyes and ears are the most important amongst the senses as sources of our contact with the reality. If seeing brings us into contact with the reality immediately and tangibly in all its possible intensity, hearing serves as a mighty supplement to it by making the knowledge gained through senses transpersonal. But, all these advantages associated with them notwithstanding, the senses of seeing and hearing were not found by gods as adequate in serving as the source of knowledge of the Absolute as symbolised by *Praṇava*. The reason behind their inadequacy in this regard was their proneness to get inclined towards the undesirable as well as the desirable. Their inclination towards the undesirable is a great handicap in their worthiness as a tool of knowledge of the Reality. These conflicting tendencies inherent in them are a heavy constriction on their reach beyond the contrarieties of the world, which knowledge of the Absolute has in any case to transcend.

Kindred is the case of mind insofar as it serves as a sheer co-ordinator of the functions of the senses. The contrarieties of the desirable and the undesirable bringing constriction to senses tell heavily on mind also as it is fed mainly with the same stuff. Consequently it remains always divided in its operation between determination and indetermination resulting in destruction as well as construction. Any agency prone to this propensity cannot be helpful in proceeding long in search of the reality, much less in

reaching the Absolute as signified by *Praṇava* and sought to be reached at through meditation on it.

This is why, the legend tells us, gods ultimately came upon the basic life-force as the proper venue of their meditation on *Praṇava* as the symbol of the absolute Reality. The life-force is symbolised here by the main breath blowing through mouth as its proper channel. Its flow through other channels, such as the nose, the vocal organ, the eye, the ear and the sense-mind is simply due to diversification out of its main current so as to make these sub-channels supplement its operation. When life-force flows through nostrils, we get evolved the sense of smell, when it flows through the cavities of mouth, we get evolved the vocal organ, when it flows through eyes, we get evolved the eye-sight and when it flows through ears, we get evolved the power of hearing. The sense-mind also is just an evolute of it. This force is not simply the air pumped in and out by lungs. Had it been considered as identical to breath, it must not have been distinguished from the air passing through the nose and the vocal organ. Breath is considered by the Upaniṣadic sage as a tool used by the life-force for sustenance of the body through which it manifests itself and keeps operative in the physical. It, therefore, may be used as a thread by catching hold of which one can come in touch with the higher reality.

The idea of *mukhya prāṇa* is made clearer in the *Praśna Upaniṣad.* According to it, once upon a time, a controversy arose amongst the organs of speech, eyes, ears and the sense-mind as to who amongst them was most powerful. Then the *mukhya prāṇa* called here as *varistha*, the most endearing one, intervened by demonstrating how on its departure the power of speech, etc., left the body and followed him like honeybees following their queen.[7] Further it is said that just as spokes of the chariot's wheel derive their collective support from the axle, even so everything including *Ṛks, Yajusas, Sāmans,* sacrifice, might of the ruling class and spiritual power of Brahmins have their source in his *prāṇa.*[8] It is also characterised as a miniature form of the Creator entering into the womb and being fed by the organs and the breaths.[9]

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7 तद्यथा मक्षिका मधुकरराजानमुत्क्रामन्तं सर्वा एवोत्क्रामन्ते तस्मिंश्च
प्रतिष्ठमाने सर्वा एव प्रतिष्ठन्ते एवं वाङ् मनश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रं च। *Praśna Up.II.4*

8 अरा इव रथनाभौ प्राणे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्।
ऋचो यजूंषि सामानि यज्ञः क्षत्रं ब्रह्म च। *Ibid.,II.6*

9 प्रजापतिश्चरसि गर्भे त्वमेव प्रतिजायसे।
तुभ्यं प्राणा प्रजास्त्विमा बलिं हरन्ति प्राणैः प्रतितिष्ठसि।। *Ibid.,II.7*

It is interesting to note that this account of the *Praśna Upaniṣad* mentions exactly the same power of speech, sense-mind and senses of hearing and seeing as are referred to in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* by way of showing their dependence on the *mukhya prāṇa*. Thus it is sufficient to bear out that what has been mentioned as *mukhya prāṇa* in the *Chāndogya* is really the most essential power of vitality lying at the basis of our psycho-physical organism rather than sheer breath blowing from mouth to lungs and *vice versa*. In this connection, it is also worth noting that just like the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, the *Praśna Upaniṣad* also associates the name of seer *Aṅgiras* with this *Prāṇa* amounting to point out to it as the special venue of his *sādhanā* resulting in the seeing of Vedic mantras.[10] The possibility of seeing mantras through *sādhanā* on this *Prāṇa* is also evident from the remark made in the mantra quoted at *footnote No.8* above to the effect that *Ṛks*, *Yajusas* and *Sāmans* are associated with it or are rooted in it like spokes in the axle of wheel. It is really in the sense of rootedness of Vedic mantras in this mysterious *Prāṇa* that the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, as quoted in the beginning, describes *Udgītha* as the essence of the Vedas. Here essence or *rasa* does not mean the product of the Veda, but the source of it. That *Udgītha* essentially is this *Prāṇa*, since it is by taking recourse to the latter that the Vedic mantras were chanted not only subsequently but also in the beginning at the stage of their seeing.

Praṇava or *Om* was the primary product of the *sādhanā* undertaken by seers like *Aṅgiras* and *Ayāsya* on this *Prāṇa*. This is why this *Prāṇa* is called *Udgītha* on the one hand and *Praṇava* on the other. This *sādhanā*, as the Upaniṣadic legend suggests, lies in rising beyond the aberrations of senses, sense-mind and speech or language and establishing one's identity with *Prāṇa* in its original and purest form. The creative vibration underlying the *Prāṇa* envisioned by going deep to the core of one's being by the seer sounds as *Om* to him resulting in seeing of mantras on the one hand and vision of the creation of the world out of it on the other. From this viewpoint, Vedic mantras and the actual creation are twin products of one and the same primeval vibration envisioned as *Om* and designated as *Praṇava*. While actual creation is the ontological side of the primeval vibration, mantras represent its epistemic side. If the symbolic account of *Udgītha* as the essence of all essences including earth, water and vegetations, etc., as quoted at the outset amounts to indicating to the origin of the actual in that vibration, the legend of gods taking to

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10 देवानामसि वह्नितमः पितृणां प्रथमा स्वधा।
ऋषीणां चरितं सत्यमथर्वाङ्गिरसामसि।। *Ibid.,II.8*

meditation on *Udgītha* through nose etc., is suggestive of the *sādhanā* undertaken by seers in arriving at the sound *Om* serving subsequently as seed of mantras seen by them. This latter point gains support also from the convention of starting recitation or chanting of mantras with the sound *Om*. It is suggestive of mantras being just prolongation of this primeval sound.

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Symbolism in the Veda works in a twofold manner. In the first place, it works in course of exploration done by seers in regard to different aspects of the Reality. This is quite evident from what has been observed until now in regard to *Praṇava* on the basis of a couple of passages occurring in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Primeval seer *Aṅgiras* and his illustrious son *Ayāsya* are the explorers mentioned here. They search out the Reality by withdrawing their attention from the senses and the sense-mind and deploying it exclusively to the niceties of the *Prāṇa* blowing through mouth. What they find out through this *sādhanā* is *Praṇava* in the form of *Om*. Once this sound is discovered as a vital symbol of the Reality it is supposed to represent, there is the problem how to understand it as such particularly in view of its monosyllabic character on the one hand and the multitudinousness of the Reality in its manifest form on the other. If there is any absolute reality behind what lies in our cognisance, it must be the sole cause of the latter, no matter in whatever sense. Having admitted this much, it will also have to be admitted that if the sound *Om* is accepted as a symbol of that Reality in its core, it will also have to be accepted as potent enough to symbolise the Reality in its manifestations also, no matter howsoever multitudinous. This point has been worked out comprehensively and systematically by the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*.

It starts with the daring proposition that the syllable *Om* is all this.[1] This proposition immediately stirs the mind with the query as to how it is possible for a monosyllabic word to represent the entire reality not only in its actually extant form but also whatever it has been in the entire past as also whatever it is potent to take the form of in future, as the *Upaniṣad* puts it. Not only this, rising above the entire manifest reality, the sage considers *Om* as representative of the Transcendent also.[2]

To say the least, the reality, in both its phases, that is, the manifest and the unmanifest, is ontological by virtue of being there and being cognised

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1 ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वम्। *Māṇḍūkya Up. 1*

2 भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति सर्वमोङ्कार एव। यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योंकार एव। *Ibid., 1*

as such by mankind, no matter partly or wholly. It is *Brahman*, expanded or expanding reality and hence prone to undergo contraction also. Now, *Brahman* being infinite in itself, if there is infinite possibility of expansion in it, it must also have inherent in it equally well infinite possibility of contraction. In its contracted form it comes to be known as *Ātman*.[3] The oneness of *Brahman* and *Ātman* opens the possibility of application of the symbol of *Brahman*, that is *Om*, to the *Ātman* also. As regards its viability to represent *Brahman* symbolically, that obviously rests in the cognisance of the seer at the apex of his experience. Since the seer has something cognate to the syllable or sound *Om* at the top of his experience, he comes to represent the reality understood through that experience as *Om*, making it thus an epistemic representation of that reality. When, however, he comes to see the same reality in the form of the Self lying within himself, the problem arises as to the applicability of that symbol to this Self or *Ātman* as well.

It is under this contingency that the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* introduces the idea of the sub-components of the sound *Om* and relates them severally to the states of consciousness the Self within us undergoes. It starts from outside and gradually moves inwards in associating different states of consciousness with different components of the sound symbolically. It calls this association of the ontological with the epistemic particularly in the articulate form as *adhyakṣara*, concerning the syllable, and *adhimātra*, concerning the syllabic measurement. While *adhyakṣara* is used by him as a symbol of the integral reality in the form of the whole of the sound *Om*, *adhimātra* has been used by him to represent the same reality in the dynamics of its manifestation. The dynamics itself is symbolised here by *pāda*, the means of movement, that is, the foot.[4] *Ātman* is conceived by him as four-footed.[5]

The first one of these feet of *Ātman* is the state of wakefulness characterised by the involvement of consciousness outside in the external world. The seven planes of being known traditionally as *bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ* and *satyam* have been referred to as limbs of the *Ātman* in this state of its existence. Though apparently infinitesimal in size, it, at the same time, is as gigantic as the whole of the universe taken

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3 सर्वं ह्येतद् ब्रह्म। अयमात्मा ब्रह्म। *Ibid.,2*

4 सोऽयमात्माऽध्यक्षरमोङ्कारः। अधिमात्रम्। पादा मात्रा मात्रश्च पादाः। *Ibid.,8*

5 सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात्। *Ibid.,2*

together and perfectly organised. *Ātman* as an organism of this dimension is shown here as possessed of as many as nineteen mouths and enjoying things concretely. On the analogy of the human personality, which it indwells, its mouths are taken to consist of the former's five organs of action, five sense organs, five *prāṇas,* and the four inner senses, namely, *manas, citta, buddhi* and *ahamkāra.* The human being's coming into contact with the world at the physical, sensory and mental levels has been conceived here as the mode of enjoyment of the world by *Ātman* brought out through the symbol of eating. Just as a human individual has the taste of the world pre-eminently through eating, even so *Ātman* is conceived here as enjoying the plenitude of the world by means of his nineteen mouths as mentioned above. *Ātman* in this capacity is named as *Vaiśvānara*, that is, the universal being.

This universal being, however, has been conceived as only the first step of *Ātman* towards its self-manifestation and is made to be represented symbolically by the letter *a*, the first component sound of the word *Om.*[6] It means that while starting to utter the word *Om* and articulating its initial sound *a*, one is expected to take cognisance of the world in all its seven planes of being and particularly as available to the human consciousness in its state of wakefulness.[7] Thus, this account involves a lot of symbolism in the form of representation of *Ātmaṇ* as a four-footed animal as well as a human being, transference of the organs of contact in the human personality with the external world to *Ātman* in the form of its mouths, consideration of the seven planes of being, being as a step in its journey onwards and representation of this entire complex of beings and functions simply by the initial component of the word *Om.*

The second foot of the *Ātman* as operative in the human personality has been identified in the form of the latter's state of dreaming. Dreaming is the state of withdrawal of the senses and the sense-mind inward. Since the basic content of the dreaming state is formed by experiences of the state of wakefulness tasting the seven planes of being through the nineteen psycho-physical channels of personality, it too is described as having seven limbs and nineteen mouths. The foodstuff it takes, however, is subtle as contrasted with that of the waking state. Moreover, as distinct from the universal being of the waking state, it is luminous rather than

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6 जागस्तिस्थानो बहिः प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः स्थूलभुग्वैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः। *Ibid.,3*

7 जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरः प्रथमा मात्राऽऽप्तेरादिमत्वाद्वा। *Ibid.,9*

tangibly pervasive. As such, it is known as *Taijas*. It is characterised as the second foot or step of the *Ātman* and hence is taken to be symbolised by the second component of the word *Om*, that is, the sound *u*.[8] If *a* is taken to represent *Vaiśvānara*, the universal being by virtue of its pervasiveness, which it possesses in common with the being, the sound *u*, as the basic constituent of the preposition *ut*, meaning upward, besides its elevated articulation in the vocal organ, is supposed to reflect a higher state in the journey of the *Ātman* towards its unfoldment. While the waking state unfolds the existential aspect of the *Ātman*, the state of dreaming brings out its aspect of knowledge, *jñāna*.[9]

The third foot of *Atman* as operative in the human personality has been identified in the form of the latter's state of dreamless sleep. Along with dream, this state is also rid of desires. Here *Ātman* gets concentrated in itself as a lump of knowledge and delight. Consciousness serves as its mouth while pure delight as its food. It is known as *Prājña*, extremely wise.[10] The component *m* of the word is taken by the Upaniṣadic sage to represent this third foot of the *Ātman*. The linguistic basis behind the symbolisation of the *Prājña* by the sound *m*, as pointed out by the sage, is the derivability of it from the root *ma*, to measure. Since *Prājña* is the measure of everything by means of its all-comprehending consciousness, it can very well be represented by the sound *m* as a part and parcel of the root *ma*. Besides this, the sage advances another probable reason operating behind this representation. It lies in *Prājña* serving as the measure of all on account of its all-comprehensiveness. What is all-comprehensive can get absorbed within it all that it comprehends.[11]

The fourth foot of *Brahman*, according to the sage, is formed by *Brahman* itself in its absoluteness. In the human consciousness, it is identified in the form of the state lying beyond the state of dreamless sleep. This state of consciousness has been characterised as worthy of being described neither as inward nor as outward, nor even as both; neither as a cube of

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8 स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तः प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः प्रविविक्तभुक् तैजसो द्वितीयः पादः। *Ibid., 4*

9 स्वप्नस्थानस्तैजस उकारो द्वितीया मात्रोत्कर्षादुभयत्वाद्वा। *Ibid., 10*

10 यत्र सुप्तो न कंचन कामं कामयते न कंचन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत्सुषुप्तम्। सुषुप्तस्थान एकीभूतः प्रज्ञानघन एवानन्दमयो ह्यानन्दभुक् चेतोमुखः प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः। । *Ibid., 5*

11 सुषुप्तस्थानेः प्राज्ञो मकारस्तृतीया मात्रा मितेरपीतेर्वा। *Ibid., 10*

consciousness nor as unconscious. It is said to lie beyond vision, beyond applicability and beyond tangibility. It is supposed to be featureless, inconceivable and indescribable. The sage suggests the possibility of getting an inkling into it through absorption of oneself in it. In this state of consciousness, according to him, the entire diversity of the world gets dissolved into One, which is the state of non-duality and absolute tranquillity. Here the individual comes round the *Ātman* itself as the sole reality of both himself and the world or indeed of everything.[12] The state of consciousness in which the Reality is realised as such or, to put it from another viewpoint, the Reality which is reflected in its purest form in this state of consciousness, is symbolised in the *Upaniṣad* by the unheard sound following the utterance of *m* in *Om*. It is characterised as measureless, practically unutterable, final point of elimination of diversities and as non-duality of the good. Since the consciousness and the reality reflected in it coincide here with each other, these features apply equally well to both of them. The fourth sound implicit in the word *Om* is, thus, symbolical of the Reality as well as of the consciousness in its purest form, which, indeed, is the *Ātman* or Self itself.[13]

If we correlate this account of symbolisation of the states of consciousness with the legend of gods and demons discussed earlier, we find a pertinent thematic symmetry between the two. In the legend, the organ of speech represented the organs of action operating in the human personality while the senses of smell, sight and audition stood for all the five sense organs. This state of man's being is obviously cognate to the state of wakefulness in which by virtue of the stimuli received from outside by the senses and responded to by the organs of action one becomes aware of the external world and plays his role actively in it. This, in terms of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, is the characteristic feature of the waking state of consciousness. The *Manas* of the legend, on the other hand, stands a parallel to the state of dreaming, for in that state while the organs of sense and action remain inactive, *Manas* remains active organising the impressions of the waking state in its own way. When *Manas* also becomes asleep, the state emerging out of its absence is the same as the state of dreamless sleep as recounted in the *Māṇḍūkya*. In view of the

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12 नान्तःप्रज्ञं न बहिःप्रज्ञं नोभयतःप्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम्।
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं
शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते। स आत्मा। *Ibid.*, 7

13 अमात्रश्चतुर्थो ऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैतः। एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव। *Ibid.*, 12

precise parallelism between the two accounts up to this extent, it is not difficult to infer that what has been suggested by *mukhya prāṇa* in the legend may possibly not be different from the fourth state of consciousness as made out by the *Māṇḍūkya*. Thus we see how the *Upaniṣads* describe the same psychological state in diverse ways, creating thus numerous symbolic systems and making them sometimes sense-oriented, sometimes consciousness-oriented as also sometimes oriented to spheres of the universe. It is in this last category that we find *a* of *Om* representing the earth, *u* representing the intermediate space, *m* standing for the heaven and the last inaudible sound suggesting to the Supernal Reality lying beyond the heaven.

The basic difference between the two symbolic systems as involved in the *Chāndogya 's* legend on the one hand and the *Māṇḍūkya's* account on the other, is that while the former is formed by way of interiorisation and suspension of the function of the senses and the mind, the latter takes shape through association of different components of the word *Om* with the states of consciousness as also the reality reflected in that consciousness. Thus, while the former relates to the *sādhanā* of the primeval seers, the latter shows the way how anyone can reap the fruit of their discovery through meditation on *Om* as a symbol of the Reality in its unmanifest as well as manifest form. Once seers *Aṅgiras* and *Ayāsya* discovered *Om* as the epistemic equivalent of the Reality in its ontological form through their movement inward into their inner being, the *Upaniṣad* took up the task of expounding how that epistemic quantity in its articulate form may become explicatory of the totality of the reality in its integral unmanifest form as well as in its dichotomous manifest forms, namely, the spiritual and the physical. The supramental effort involved in the legend through its two seers is reflected in the legend through its placing at the level of the gods working in opposition to the demons. Their discovery of *Om* as the epistemic and articulate equivalent of the Supreme Reality entailed their fierce struggle against the demons, the forces of ignorance and division operating on the supramental plane. As distinct from it, the *Māṇḍūkya's* account relates to the silent process how the symbolic word *Om* can be amplified so as to comprehend within it everything whatsoever including both, the subjective and the objective. The possibility of the subject grasping the object and getting the latter represented within it in the form of consciousness of it indicates to some sort of intimate relationship between the two categories of the reality. That relationship is very well borne out by the inherence of both of them, symbolically at least, in the word *Om*. In view of this relationship,

meditation on *Om* can make one transcend the dichotomy of subject and object and reach the integral state representing the Supreme Being.

For the sake of meditation on *Praṇava* or *Om*, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* conceives of the idea of bow, arrow and target. It indicates how to use *Om* as bow, the Self as arrow and conceive of *Brahman* as target against which the arrow is intended to be shot. In this act, the *Upaniṣad* observes, one must be attentive to the extent of identifying oneself with the arrow.[14] Meditation is an extremely subtle process in which one seeks to become absolutely oneself. Since one's real self is essentially identical to the universal and transcendent Self known as *Brahman*, one cannot be taken to have reached the end of his meditation unless he has discovered his complete identity with that Ultimate Reality. As such, if explained in its real psychological terms, this whole process would be extremely difficult for the initiate to understand, and even if understood to some extent, it would be difficult to act upon. It is as a remedy to this difficulty that the Upaniṣadic sage conceives of the symbolism of bow, arrow and target. The hunter cannot succeed in hitting at the target if he is not perfectly attentive. For successful accomplishment of his task, he has mentally to become one with the arrow on the one hand and the target on the other. It is through this fantastically peculiar quality of his mind that he is able to make the arrow precisely meet the target. The Upaniṣadic sage makes use of the same quality of mind in an entirely different area of behaviour, that is meditation on *Brahman*, the Absolute. Since it is the arrow, which meets the target, pierces into it and becomes visibly one with it, it has been used to represent the *Ātman* intended to be made one with *Brahman*, the target. But, obviously, there is a wide gap between the *Brahman* and the *Ātman*, one representing the universal and the transcendent while the other only the individual. It is as a means to overcome this gap that the image of the bow has been introduced by the sage to symbolise the word *Om*. In this symbolism, bow has been used as a symbol of *Om* which by itself is a symbol of the Ultimate Reality, no matter be it considered individually as *Ātman* or universally and transcendentally as *Brahman*. Indeed, it is by virtue of its capacity to represent both in essence that *Om* has been taken up as an apt symbol of the integral Reality. In the symbolism of the bow and the arrow this quality of *Om* gets represented by the capability of the bow to make the arrow meet the target.

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14 प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत्।। *Mund.Up.II.2.4*

If the symbolism of bow and arrow creates any impression that the Supreme Being somehow lies at a certain distance from the Self in the elimination of which the word *Om* is instrumental, another mantra from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* does away with that apprehension by means of the symbols of fire-sticks and fire. It asks us to treat our body as the lower stick and *Om* as the upper one and by using one's meditativeness as the force applied in rubbing the upper one against the lower one, one should try to see the hidden Being getting revealed.[15] This symbolic imagery is rooted in the ancient practice of producing fire by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other. In the Vedic tradition, the lower piece of wood or stick is called *adharāraṇī*. In the process of rubbing, the lower one remains stationary while the upper one is rubbed against it with great patience. In due course, the expected spark arises eventually out of the pieces of wood themselves contrary to the apparent view of things according to which fire is the consumer of wood and by no means inherent in it. The Upaniṣadic sage makes use of this scenario in the explanation of the emergence of the Supreme Being from the personality of the *sādhaka* himself meditating diligently on *Om* as a symbol of Him.

While the *Śvetāśvatara's* symbolic imagery regarding *Om* restores the Supreme Being to the inner being of the individual himself, there is one introduced by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, which makes Him not only coincide with his *Ātman* but also get located at a particular point in his body. According to it, if one wishes to go across darkness, one should meditate on one's own Self in the form of *Om* at a particular point in his body where thousands of nerves spread over the body meet together like spokes of a chariot-wheel meeting the axle.[16] Such a point in the human body has been located by Upaniṣadic sages at two places, the heart and the brain. This is very much evident from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad's* allegory of the entry of the Supreme Being into the human personality. According to this allegory, after the Supreme created the worlds and their divine guardians, the latter felt the necessity of specific dwellings for themselves where they could get their sustenance comfortably. The Supreme brought before them a bull and wanted them to enter into him. Finding the bull insufficient for the purpose, they did not accept him. Then was brought a

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15 स्वदेहमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम्।
ध्याननिर्मथनाभ्यासाद्देवं पश्येन्निगूढवत्।। *Svet.Up.I.14*

16 अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाड्यः स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः।
ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात्।। *Mund.Up.II.2.6*

horse before them. The guardians of the worlds did not accept him either. Ultimately was brought a human being before them. They readily accepted him and entered into his different organs, such as *Agni* into his mouth, *Vāyu* into his nose, *Aditya* into his eyes, etc., etc. Having accomplished this much, He thought how the human personality can remain intact if the guardians of the worlds as embodied in his different organs are left to act in their own ways in the absence of anyone else to co-ordinate their actions. In view of this deficiency, He himself entered into the human body by making a hole at the top of the head. Hence onwards, He remains active in co-ordinating the functions of the organs in the waking state and takes rest in the inmost part of the heart during the state of dreamless sleep. In the fourth state of consciousness supposed to be redemptive, He returns to the saggital suture lying at the top of the head forming the precise point of His entry into the human body. It is the most cardinal point in the human personality lying at the centre of both the hemispheres of the brain.[17] Rejection of the bull and the horse by the guardians of the worlds, as the allegory tells us, is indicative of the Upaniṣadic sage's awareness of the inadequacy of the animal body particularly in this respect, as, otherwise, the latter too has got the same sense organs as any human being. The significant difference between the two is that while this point of co-ordination in the human brain is strong enough to create the sense of integrality of the personality as also the corresponding power of cognition and volition, it has remained relatively weaker in subhuman species. This is why the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* asks us to meditate on this point through *Om* as a symbol of the Self. Through this meditation, the *Upaniṣad* assures us, we can get to that Self, which is essentially same as the Supreme Being.

This is the basic function of symbol. It is meant for leading one eventually to the real object it is used to symbolise. If the symbol is used as a substitute of the object concerned initially, the object concerned replaces it equally well eventually, provided the proper mechanism of restoration of the object from within the symbol is applied carefully. Some sort of concentration or meditation is the minimum requirement in any case of restoration of the object from the symbol. Restoration of *Brahman* or *Ātman* from within *Om*, however, needs maximum intensity and depth of concentration and meditation on account of both, the symbol and the object symbolised, being subtlest possible in their respective categories. A single word, and that also just monosyllabic, representing the totality of

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17. *Ait.Up. Chapter I*

the Reality in all its grossness as well as subtlety, manifestation as well as unmanifest form, analytically as well as synthetically is, indeed, a miraculous feat of the human imagination, ideation and contemplation, which the Vedic seers and sages have accomplished in identifying *Om* as the most appropriate symbol of *Brahman.*

The appropriateness of this symbol in symbolising the Ultimate Reality lies not only in its phonetic but also semantic value. The word *Om* in Sanskrit means `*yes*', the expression of positivity of all varieties including that of events as well as of objects extending up to existence as such in sharp contrast to the negativity of things going back to the negation of all whatever. On account of this semantic value of it, the word *Om* can, thus, stand for the existence in general forming the ultimate basis of everything, irrespective of the individual, the universal and the transcendent and without the admittance of which one cannot justify one's own existence, much less that of anything else. Such an existence is Brahman as is admitted by *Upaniṣads.* As the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* points out, if one dares to deny existence to *Brahman,* one digs the grave of one's own existence prior to doing so and it is only by admitting *Brahman* as the positive reality that one can have justification for being taken himself as something in existence.[18] Thus this semantic value of the word also has contributed to the acceptance of *Om* as a symbol of *Brahman.*

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18 असन्नेव स भवति असद्ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्।
अस्ति ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद सन्तमेनं ततो विदुः।। *Tait.Up.II.6*

III

We have seen in the foregoing lectures how at least two Vedic seers, namely, *Aṅgiras* and *Ayāsya* were involved in identifying *Om* as the most appropriate means to meditation on the Supreme Being. Out of them *Aṅgiras* in particular had become a legend in the *Ṛgveda* itself participating even with gods in the search of precious things such as cows, gems, etc. By virtue of being his son, *Ayāsya* also can be expected to have carried onward the tradition of his illustrious father. The *Chāndogya* 's account positively confirms this expectation. These two seers having been primeval in the Vedic hierarchy, the others succeeding them also may be supposed to have used *Om* in their meditations, contemplation, devotion and literary creation. A direct confirmation of this supposition comes from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where *Om* has been regarded as a summary word or syllable uttered by all the Vedas as well as aimed at to be comprehended by means of different kinds of *tapas* and observance of self-continence, *brahmĀcārya.*[1] This observation of the *Upaniṣad* shows what a great quantum of effort might have been put in by Vedic seers in discovering and identifying this symbolic word representing the Ultimate Reality in its absolute stasis as well as eternal dynamics and getting expressed most cardinally in the Vedas. If retracing what it stands for requires so much *tapas* and self-continence even subsequent to the discovery of it, as has been indicated to in this Upaniṣadic mantra, obviously much more of them would have costed the Vedic seers led by *Aṅgiras* and *Ayāsya* in its discovery and identification. As such, this symbolic word, as pointed out by the *Upaniṣad*, ought to form the crux of the Veda both literally and connotatively.

Now this being the position of *Om* in the Veda as per the Upaniṣadic statements and accounts, the problem is whether there is any reference to it in the Veda itself, and if so, it would go a long way in determining the real character of this primeval literary colossus. Looking from this viewpoint, we find the word actually occurring for the first time in the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*. At the first instance, in this *Samhitā* it occurs in connection with performance of the sacrifice known as *Darśa-*

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1 सर्वे वेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत् ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्।। *Kaṭha Up.II.15*

Paurṇamāsa. Here while *ghṛta* is being offered and gods are being implored upon to relish the offering, *Brahma* asks *Adhvaryu* with the articulation of the word *Om* in the lengthened form to go ahead in the accomplishment of his task.[2] The extraordinary lengthening for three moras in the articulation of *Om* bears out that the word is not used here in the ordinary sense of 'yes'. Moreover, the whole of the mantra, except this word, indicates to action and mobility ranging from enjoyment to speedy movement of mind sped up by the pouring of *ghṛta* in fire. It is against this background that the word *Om* has been uttered by *Brahma* directing *Adhvaryu* to proceed in his act of performance. In fact, from amongst the four priests engaged in sacrificial the performance while the other three, namely, *Hotā, Udgāta* and *Adhvaryu* keep themselves busy with their respective tasks of recitation, chanting and manual work of all varieties, *Brahma* sits standstill supervising and directing the entire performance. He is just like the supernal bird keeping watch on the actions of its companion relishing fruits of the *peepal* tree representing the universe, as has beautifully been envisioned by the celebrated Rgvedic seer *Dīrghatamas*. He, thus, stands for Brahman, the Ultimate Reality setting out the universal dynamics from within Itself and supervising its movements ahead. While Brahman sets forth and controls the universal dynamics, *Brahma* sets forth and controls the replica of the same dynamics in the miniature form of sacrifice. The word *Om* uttered by him in the lengthened form, therefore, symbolises Infinity inclined to give shape to the finite. He, indeed, represents Brahman in the sacrificial context while the word *Om* uttered by him stands for the directive of Brahman to set out everything in motion.

The word *Om* occurs again in the same *Samhitā* twice in its last chapter. In the first one of these occurrences, the context relates to cremation of the body. It has been observed in this context that on account of its endurance the air is immortal while the body gets reduced to ashes. As such, the mantra continues, the departing soul ought to remind itself of what it has accomplished in the past as also it should think of the sphere it is departing to and of the will it possesses for operation in that sphere.[3] In the middle of these indicative and imperative statements has been

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2 मनो॑ जू॒तिर्जु॑षता॒माज्य॑स्य॒ बृह॒स्पति॒र्य॒ज्ञमि॒मं त॑नोत्वरि॑ष्टं य॒ज्ञं स॒मि॒मं द॑धातु।
विश्वे॑ दे॒वास॑ इ॒ह मा॑दयन्ताम्। ॐ । प्रति॑ष्ठ। *YV.II.13*

3 वा॒युर॑नि॒लम॒मृत॒मथे॒दं भस्मा॑न्तं॒ शरी॑रम्।
ओ३म् ,क्रतो॑ स्मर क्लि॒बे स्मर॑ कृ॒तं स्मर। । *Ibid.,XL.15*

placed the word *Om* here in the lengthened form. As pointed out earlier, its lengthening must have the special purpose of indicating that the word has been used here not in the ordinary sense of `yes' but in the specific sense of the Ultimate Reality forming the basis and background of everything as well as of every act. It represents *Is* as referred to in the very first mantra of the chapter who, according to the mantra concerned, is to be supposed to indwell eternally the ever-changing scenario of the world as the basic reality behind it and forming the ground of the imperative that one should sustain oneself on what is made available to him by the Supreme Being without coveting for anything beyond that divine provision.[4] In conformity with this fundamental proposition made out in the beginning of the chapter the seer points out that the body being reducible to ashes eventually, one should take care of one's past actions and of the will to do in future, which at least are not so evanescent as body. If, in comparison to body, the air involved in its sustenance as well as the life's is at least relatively enduring, even so are the past actions and the future planning for action in comparison to life on this earth. The absolutely eternal, however, is only what is indicated by the word *Om*. Thus, *Om,* in this mantra represents the *Īś* of the first mantra by taking cognisance of whom one has to get reconciled to reduction of the body to ashes at the end of life as one ought to have done with the separation of other things earlier in life as per the imperative of the first mantra.

The concluding mantra of the chapter, along with use of the word *Om* in it, brings this chain of ideas to the point of final conclusion. It observes as a prelude that the face of truth is covered by a golden vessel, otherwise there is perfect identity between myself and the *Puruṣa* indwelling the sun.[5] Naturally the sun is over there at a distance of more than fourteen millions of kilometres from the earth where the individual concerned stands. This distance along with the time involved in its coverage is a great impediment in the individual's getting close to the sun and not to speak of getting absolutely merged with the *Puruṣa* indwelling it. Assertion of one's separate individuality is the most fascinating proposition in one's life. Even if one were enabled to reach the proximity of the sun by eliminating the factor of time and space, scarcely would one like to get

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4 ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम्।। *Ibid.,XL.1*

5 हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
योऽसावादित्ये पुरुषः सोऽसावहम्।। *Ibid.,XL.17*

merged with the *Puruṣa* indwelling it. This is the golden vessel concealing the face of truth inside it. If it were to be removed, the truth would automatically emerge from it in the form of oneness of the individual with the universal in essence.

With this prelude, *Dīrghatamas*, the seer of the mantra, introduces the cryptic expression *Om kham brahma*. Regarding the last two words of the phrase, what is significant to note is that it recurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* also with the addition of the word *kam* to it. There in that *Upaniṣad* the terms *kam* and *kham* are taken to have been used to specify the qualities of delight and unboundedness visualised in Brahman. Combined together they have been taken to indicate that Brahman is unbounded in Its delight on the one hand and delights in Its unboundedness on the other.[6] Here in *Dīrghatamas'* mantra instead of the Upaniṣadic *kam*, the word *Om* has been used. Thus if *kham* is used there to specify the unboundedness of Brahman, *Om* should also stand for certain other attributes of It. Reasonably enough, if *kam* and *kham* are symbolic of Brahman in the *Upaniṣad* intended to bring out certain features of it separately, there is no ground to deny the same function to *Om* also. In fact, as per the basic contention of the legend of gods fighting successfully against the demons by means of meditation on *Om* in the form of the main breath, *Om* and the breath are quite interchangeable to each other. This gets practically illustrated in the *Chāndogya's* observation on *Brahman* as also *Prāṇa* besides *ka* and *kha*.[7] Since, according to this *Upaniṣad* itself, *Om* is brought in its real essence through meditation on it by means of *Prāṇa*, it can very well bear symbolic equivalence with the latter. Thus we can justifiably take the Yajurvedic expression *Om kham brahma* as equivalent to the Upaniṣadic *Prāṇo brahma, kaṁ brahma, khaṁ brahma*. Between these two expressions, if the Yajurvedic *Om* gets replaced by the Upaniṣadic *Prāṇa*, the Yajurvedic *kha* represents the Upaniṣadic *ka* and *kha* both, since this *Upaniṣad* itself eventually observes that what verily is *ka*, the same is *kha*.[8]

This elaboration on the equivalence of the Yajurvedic and the Upaniṣadic expressions bears out how what has been stated cryptically in the

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6 *Chāndogya Up.IV.10.4-5*

7 *Ibid.,IV.10.4*

8 यद्वाव कं तदेव खम्। यदेव खं तदेव कम्। *Ibid.,IV.10.5*

Upaniṣad is already lying there in the *Samhitā* in a still more cryptic form. The Upaniṣadic expression, thus, is only an elaboration on the Vedic. What the *Upaniṣad* really has done is that it in the first place has substituted *Om* by *Prāṇa* in view of the latter's unique position in serving as a door to what the former symbolises. Secondly, it has bifurcated the Yajurvedic *kha* into *ka* and *kha*. This has been done on two grounds, phonetic and philosophical. Phonetically, as an aspiration over *ka*, *kha* involves the latter also within it. Philosophically, *kha* is inclusive of *ka* by virtue of representing for space as such, which is inclusive of all individualities, within the purview of whose experience falls *ka* as denotative of delight. Thus, all individuals existing in the world along with the entire quantum of delight actual or potential in the inmost of their respective beings, dwell eventually in space. On account of this, the entire space they indwell becomes delightful no less intensely than anyone of the individuals indwelling it. Over and above this intensity, the delight, by virtue of its association with the space, gets added to it the feature of expandedness. This is what the equivalence of *ka* and *kha* in the *Upaniṣad* implies. While the equivalence of *ka* to *kha* adds extensity to the intensity of the delight experienced in the inmost being of the individual, that of *kha* to *ka* brings intensity to that extensity. This equivalence stated so cryptically finds a clearer expression in the same *Upaniṣad* imparting instruction to the aspirant to meditate on *Brahman* as mind if he chooses to pursue intimately spiritual line of *sādhanā*, and as space if he is extrovert and is keen to take up something outside himself for his meditation. For integral effect, however, the *Upaniṣad* asks to try on both the lines and integrate the two together.[9]

The word *Om* in the Yajurvedic mantra under consideration, therefore, on account of being placed at the head of so significant an expression as *kham brahma*, can fairly well be supposed to have in its purview in a condensed form this entire philosophy of equivalence of the individual and the universal in the transcendence of the Supreme. This is very much implied in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad's* interpretation of the component letters of *Om* so as to represent the earth, the intermediate space, the heaven and the Transcendent on the one hand and the consciousness of the waking state, of the states of dream and dreamless sleep as also of transcendence on the other. If the former is the way of the extrovert, the

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9 मनो ब्रह्मेत्युपासीत। इत्यध्यात्मम्। अथाधिदैवतम्। आकाशो ब्रह्म।
इत्युभयमादिष्टं भवत्यध्यात्मं चाधिदैवतं च। *Ibid., III. 18. 1*

latter is that of the introvert, both, however, having the full possibility of getting coincided with each other resulting in the experience of the Reality in the integral way.

The word *Praṇava* occurs in some other Yajurvedic *Samhitās*, such as the *Taittirīya* and the *Maitrāyaṇi*, which contributes to the confirmation of the viewpoint taken up here that the Vedic seers were fully conversant with the symbolism of the word *Om* even at that stage which came to be dwelt upon elaborately in the *Upaniṣads*, as discussed already. Now the problem concerns the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, where this word does not occur at all. Are we, therefore, to conclude that this word is an innovation of the post-Rgvedic age. Subscription to this view, however, becomes a suspect when we take into account the pertinent remark of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* that the word which recurs repeatedly in all the Vedas, is spoken of by all types of *tapas* as also for attaining to the Reality signified by which people have been taking recourse to the path of self-continence, is summarily the word *Om*.[10] The *Upaniṣad* in the same strain further adds that this word is *Brahman*, this word is the Highest and, as such, it is through the knowledge of this word that one can get whatever one desires.[11] Significantly enough, while the first one of these mantras refers to *Om* as a word, the second one indicates to it as something undecaying and hence eternal coinciding with the irreducible constituent of language, *i.e.*, the letter. Now, in view of its pre-eminence, talking of `all the Vedas' without the *Ṛgveda* carries no sense at all. One is, therefore, obliged to examine closely from this viewpoint this *Samhitā* to see if there is any reference to the word *Om* in it.

Fortunately enough, *Dīrghatamas*, to whom has been ascribed the last chapter of the *Yajurveda* containing the two significant references to *Om* in it, as discussed already, happens to be a *Ṛgvedic* seer also and so prominently as to have seen as many as twenty-five hymns, including the most celebrated one in the *Samhitā*, that is, the *Asya Vāmīya*. In this hymn occurs a significant mantra having the word *akṣara* used as the substratum of mantras. According to it, the *Ṛks* lie in *akṣara* in the highest heaven wherein also dwell all the gods; he who does not know that *akṣara*, what will he do with the mantra and those who knew it, sit in

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10 सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद् वदन्ति।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत् ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्।। *Katha Up. II.15*

11 एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम्।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत्।। *Ibid.,II.16*

the company of them.[12] The word *akṣara* in this mantra may be treated both as an adjective of *parame vyoman* as well as a substantive in itself pointing to the supernal substratum of mantras. As an adjective it would simply qualify *parame vyoman*, highest space, by eternity while as a substantive it in itself would form the substratum of the mantras in the highest space. In case we give credence to the latter alternative, while *akṣara* would form substratum of mantras, *parama vyoman* would do the same in regard to gods. As per the thrust of ideas in the mantra, both the substrata are coincident, forming two dimensions of one and the same reality, one extending in space and the other in time. If *parama vyoman* refers to infinity in space, *akṣara* suggests to infinity in time. If space cannot do without time, the latter cannot do without space. In view of this sort of relationship between *akṣara* and *parama vyoman*, it does not make any difference whether we take *akṣara* as an adjective or as a substantive. If gods are expansive by virtue of dwelling in *parama vyoman*, they by virtue of their immortality cannot do without continuing in *akṣara*. Kindred, therefore, should be the case with *Ṛks*. If by virtue of subsisting in *akṣara* they have the prospect of maintaining their eternity, they ought to be extremely expansive on account of their placement in the *parama vyoman*. Such an *akṣara*, which is eternal in its own right, ought to be as expansive as the *parama vyoman* on account of being a coefficient of it. Such an *akṣara* cannot afford to be anything but the word *Om* as explained earlier. This is what has been admitted in certain schools of Vedic learning throughout as has been recorded by *Sāyaṇa* in the name of *apare*, others. These schools positively hold that in this mantra the word *akṣara* refers to *Praṇava* in the form of *Om*, which is eternal on the one hand and all-comprehending on the other on account of underlying all the Vedas.[13]

The relationship between *akṣara* and *parama vyoman*, as explained above, explains well the indication to *Om* in the *Upaniṣad* as an *akṣara* on the one hand and as a *pāda* on the other. While *akṣara* denotes its survivability against the passage of time, *pāda* refers to its movement in space implying its pervasiveness. Indeed the *Upaniṣad's* characterisation of *Om* in this twofold manner in one strain has behind it the equivalence of *akṣara* and *parama vyoman* as made out in the *Rgvedic* mantra under

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12 ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः।
यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत् तद् विदुस्त इमे समासते।। *RV.I.164.39*

13 अपरे प्रकारान्तरेण प्रतिपादयन्ति। ऋचो अक्षरे ऋगुपलक्षितसर्ववेदसम्बन्धिन्यक्षरे
प्रणवरूपे ओंकारे अविनाशिनि सर्ववेदेषु व्याप्ते वा। *Sāyaṇa on RV.I.164.39*

consideration. This equivalence bears out *Om* as the most fundamental building block of language on the one hand and as the source of the universal process on the other. Thus it is ontological as well as acoustic. This dual character of it may as a matter of fact apparently have a sense of improbability associated with it. But the sense of improbability loses its force when we go deeper and take cognisance of the fact that sound as the basic stuff of language along with all its letters, words and phonemes is in the last analysis the basic acoustic value arising out of the rhythm responsible for emergence of the universe in all its tangibility as well as variety and complexity. Incidentally the acoustic value of that all-creating rhythm has been identified by Vedic seers as equivalent to *Om*. The characterisation of this rhythm as eternal, *akşara*, on the one hand and as all-pervading on the other, indicates to its transcendence of time and space both.

Reference to *Om* as an *akşara* in the singular in the Veda originally poses the problem of the feasibility of its analysis into the plurality of its component parts such as *a, u, m* besides an unheard sound crowning them all, as has been done in the *Upanişads*. From the linguistic viewpoint, if *Om* is a compound sound, it ought not to have been termed as an *akşara* in the well-known sense of letter. This shows that *akşara* in the Veda has been used not in the sense of letter but in the sense of syllable, which *Om* as a matter of fact is by virtue of being a monosyllabic word. The analysis of it into the letters is a work of subsequent sages. It, however, bears out the possibility of emergence of sound in plural from the original integer of sound as the acoustic value of the fundamental rhythm in the same way as the non-dual Reality has diversified itself in the form of plurality of objects and beings.

IV

There is a *Upaniṣad* known as *Śaunaka*. It gives us a revealing clue to the understanding of the symbolism of *Praṇava* in the Veda. It begins with an account of hostility between gods and demons in which in the absence of *Indra* the gods were defeated by the demons. Then came *Indra* in the scene and asked *Gāyatrī* to come to their rescue. She expressed her apprehension that she might not be able to face them successfully. Then *Indra* proposed to place *Praṇava* in front of her. On this being proposed, she expressed her apprehension that if done so, *Praṇava* would become a sharer in the glory that would emanate from the victory. *Indra* told her that since *Praṇava* is highly glorious in itself, it would be below its dignity to share in anything. He added that she and *Praṇava* both might get the whole of the glory together. In this context,he described *Praṇava* as an *Akṣara* or monosyllabic word signifying permission, acknowledgement, reception and placement. Further he characterised it as winsome, pervasive of everything, one and many together, multiple in colour, form, sound, smell, taste and touch.[1] These features, as pointed to by *Indra*, show that *Praṇava* in his view represented the totality of the reality in all its tangibility as well as intangibility.

Following this characterisation of *Praṇava* by *Indra*, what is stated by the Upaniṣadic sage is most revealing from our point of view. He observes that it is by virtue of its multi-featuredness that *Praṇava* is supposed to have assumed the form of *Indra* acoustically. Since all beings in the universe as well as the Vedas and sacrifices have their collective centre in this *Akṣara,* adds the sage, the same status has come to be accorded to *Indra* also.[2] This observation of the Upaniṣadic sage not only adds a new dimension to the interpretation of the Veda but also seems to have touched the core of the real understanding of this great scripture. If this proposition were to be accepted, *Indra* would not remain simply the god of rain or an embodiment of the Āryan leadership as he is normally

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1 अक्षरं वा एषः। तस्मादोमित्यनुजानन्ति ओमिति प्रतिपद्यन्त ओमित्यभ्याददत ओमित्यभिनिधापयन्ति। तदेतदक्षरं जैत्रमित्वरं सर्वाणि भूतान्यभ्यात्तं यदनेकमेकं नानावर्णं नानारूपं नानाशब्दं नानागन्धं नानारसं नानास्पर्शमिति। *Śaunaka Up.I.*

2 अथो खल्वाहुरिन्द्रो वाचैतदक्षरमिति। शर्वाणि ह वा इमानि भूतान्येतदक्षरमन्वायत्तानि सर्वे वेदाः सर्वे यज्ञा इत्यथ खल्विन्द्रमन्वायत्तमिति। *Ibid.,I.*

understood to have been, but would emerge as a symbolic representation of the central principle obtaining behind the dynamics of the universe, stimulating, controlling and guiding the latter as also defending its working from the forces hostile to it. It is in this capacity alone that he can be taken as an embodiment of *Praṇava*, which is conceived as the centre of all no matter cognitive as the Veda, conative as sacrifice, and tangibly existential as beings of the universe.

That *Praṇava* is pervasive of all the Vedas, as has been observed in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, finds an elaboration further in this *Upaniṣad*. According to it, when *Praṇava* observed that it pervaded everything in the Veda including the metre *Gāyatri*, it thought it immaterial whether it was pronounced in the beginning of a particular mantra or at the end of it. In view of this sort of its omnipresence, however, the *Upaniṣad* tells us, it became afraid lest it might fall in the cognisance of the demons and thus be sought to be killed. Under this apprehension, it assumed the form of a bull shorn of horns. Having thus reduced itself to the form of a calf, it became all the more fascinating to the people wishing to cherish it as the source of energy, illumination, immortality and unagingness. This is what *Indra* essentially is. By contemplating on *Praṇava* in this form, the sage asserts, one becomes unaging, immortal and illumined.[3]

By virtue of being all-pervading and eternal, the sage observes, *Praṇava* serves as the fundamental reality behind everything whatever. This status of it, however, would not have come to the human cognisance, had it not reduced itself to the monosyllabic size by getting shorn of its horns, as it were. This reduction in size made it reach beyond the range of cognition of the adversaries. Since its reduced form was instrumental in protecting it from the adversaries, this may be regarded as the basis of its all-pervading form also.[4]

This statement of the Upaniṣadic sage speaks volumes regarding the position of *Praṇava* and its symbolism in the Veda. According to it, by virtue of representing the all-pervading Ultimate Reality most intimately, *Praṇava* is to be supposed as identical to that Reality symbolically at

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3 स हापश्यन्नैतदञ्जसैव सर्वा रूपाण्येवमभिचक्षीरन्निति। स हान्तत एवात्मानमुपसंहृत्य तावदेवाग्राहयत्। स विशृङ्ग एवाभवत्। तस्माद् विशृङ्गमेवैतद् इहानु-दवन्ति। तदाहुर्यद्वा एतस्य वीर्यं यच्छु-कं यज्ज्योतिर्यदमृतं यदजर्यं तदव इति। तस्मात् त एवातो ज्योतिरमृतमजर्यं प्रतिपद्यन्ते। *Ibid.,II*

4. प्रतिष्ठा ह वा एषा यत् प्रणवः। सर्वाणि ह वा इमानि भूतानि प्रणव एव प्रतितिष्ठन्ति। तस्य ह वा एषा प्रतिष्ठा यत्रासावात्मानमुपसंहृत्याजुगुपत्। *Ibid.,IV*

least, since any symbol cannot represent anything duly without getting identified to it at the stage of symbolisation. As such, *Praṇava* is to be treated as the all-pervading Reality itself in a certain sense. But the Reality on getting manifested becomes dichotomous assuming the form of contrariety between gods and demons fighting against each other. The dichotomy, thus, tends to infest it with perversity, which is a great setback to its integrality and purity. It is as a device to safeguard the original integrality and purity that the Reality individualises itself in the form of *Ātman* and enters into the human body *via* the saggital suture at the top of the head, as the *Aitareya Uapnisad* recounts it. The same formula is applied by the author of this *Upaniṣad* to the symbolic side of the Reality also. Since the Vedas represent that Reality most abundantly and intimately, they may be treated as symbolic of It to the human consciousness. But the difficulty is that the Vedas represent the Reality in its manifest as well as unmanifest form and even then with greater emphasis on the former. This diversification in their interest and function dilutes their purity in a certain sense. It is as a remedy to this problem of dilution of representation of the Reality to the human consciousness that the Vedas have chosen to condense themselves in the form of *Om*, wherein the letters *a, u, m* and the unheard fourth sound are supposed to represent the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda* and the *Atharvaveda* respectively. Owing to the principle of identity operating in the relationship between the symbol and the reality symbolised by it, the same components of *Om* are taken to represent the earth, the intermediate space, the heaven and what is beyond the heaven respectively. Owing to this device of symbolic representation and the consequent condensation, *Om* is supposed to represent the Reality in its purest form and by virtue of such representation maintain its own purity also.

By way of adducing the Vedic authority on this point, the Upaniṣadic sage refers to a famous mantra seen by *Vāmadeva*. As has already been explained, the mantra points to a bull having four horns, three feet, two heads and seven hands and, having been tied in a threefold manner, roaring constantly after having entered the mortals as a great god.[5]

Besides the grammatical interpretation offered to it by *Patañjali*, ritual and solar by *Sāyaṇa*, this *Upaniṣad* conceives of an interpretation of it in

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5 चत्वारि शृङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य।
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति महो देवो मर्त्यां आविवेश।। *RV.IV.58.3*

terms of the word *Om*. According to it, the three obvious sounds involved in the formation of the word *Om* along with the last inaudible one are represented by the four horns of the said bull. He takes the involvement of the three places of articulation in the human vocal organ in the pronunciation of this word to have been represented in the mantra by the three feet of the bull. He considers the two obvious letters of *Om*, that is, *o* and *m* to have been symbolised by the two heads of the bull. In his view, the seven hands of the bull stand for the seven varieties of notes applied to the pronunciation of this word. The pronunciation of it as a three-lettered word, according to the sage, has been symbolised by the threefold tying of the bull.[6] He regards the bull of this description, which is also said to have entered the mortals, as nothing but the word *Om* itself represented symbolically also as *Indra*.[7]

Thus there is a twofold symbolism involved in this mantra, according to the sage. In his view, the basic reality sought to be brought out here is the word *Om*. It, at the first instance, has been conceived as *Indra* on account of his indispensability in fighting against the forces of destruction working against the creative surge of the world. In the second move towards symbolisation, *Indra* has come to be conceived as a bull in view of the latter's roaring voice as well as extraordinary might. Of course, there is a co-ordination between the bull's roaring voice and the display of might in fighting against his rival. This imagery of the bull and the co-ordination of might and roaring voice in him had created such an impact on the mind of the Vedic seers that they have come to use it for the sake of giving an inkling into the primeval circumstances under which the sound *Om* emanating from the Reality happened to create the world as well as kept continued to safeguard the creation from the onslaught of the forces of destruction.

In order to prove his point of symbolisation to this effect, the Upaniṣadic sage quotes another Rgvedic mantra addressed to *Indra* and describing him as a bull making roaring sound and as having entered into the mortals: "*Having grown in the company of the Maruts,*" the mantra tells us, "*the bull roars loudly and continuously when he is motivated to do so. Since he has entered into all the created beings, he is said to have entered*

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6 यदिमास्तिस्रोऽथासाविति चत्वारीति। यदिमे द्वे वाक्षरे त्रिभिरुपनुवन्ति तत् त्रय इति। यत् प्रत्यक्षं तद् द्वे इति। यदुद्गीथं सप्तभिरभिप्रपद्यन्ते तत् सप्तेति। अथो खल्वाहुः सप्तभिरेनं स्वारयन्तीति। यदिमांस्त्रीनभिधत्ते तत् त्रिधेति। *Śaunaka Up. V.*

7 यदिन्द्र एवोद्गीथ स्तद् वृषभ इति। *Ibid., V.*

into the mortals."[8] This mantra is claimed by the Upaniṣadic sage as Rgvedic but it is found in a partly variant form in the extant *Śākala Śākhā* of the *Samhitā*. Of course, in the *Śākala Śākhā* it occurs twice exactly in the same form, once in a hymn seen by *Viśvāmitra* and at the other in a hymn seen by *Bharadvāja*, the son of *Bṛhaspati*.[9] The first *pāda* of the mantra is perfectly common to all the three occurrences of it while it varies largely in the reading as given by *Śaunaka* from that of *Viśvāmitra's* as well as *Bharadvāja's*. It is quite possible that *Śaunaka's* source in regard to this mantra is some other recension of the *Samhitā*, which most probably is lost to us. If that be the case, the mantra as a whole can be taken as symbolic of something universally pervasive as well as transcendent and, therefore, as no way different from *Praṇava* or at least what it stands for. If, on the other hand, there be any doubt regarding this surmise, this much at least is sure that the mantra as quoted by *Śaunaka* is an adaptation of *Viśvāmitra's* and *Bharadvāja's* mantra, the adaptation, again, having been made on the lines of the particular idea contained in *Vāmadeva's* mantra relating to the four-horned bull. From this standpoint, the third *pāda* of the mantra seems to be explanatory of the fourth *pada*, which in its last couple of crucial words coincides with *Vāmadeva's*. As such, from *Śaunaka's* viewpoint, not only *Vāmadeva's* famous mantra but those of *Viśvāmitra* and *Bharadvāja* also, though apparently referring to *Indra* as a bull, does really relate to *Praṇava* as their subject matter. As such, the bull of this mantra growing with the aid of *Maruts*, having a large number of enemies to fight against, operating as the divine controller and winner of the world, and being mighty and might-giving may justifiably be taken as the same as visualised by *Vāmadeva*. In this case the latter's four horns would stand for perfection in the power of fighting, three feet for higher order of dynamism, two heads for boundless knowledge, and seven hands for infinite power of action. Invocation of this bull by the seer would amount to evocation of the bull from within the seer himself, which the former underlies by virtue of having entered into the seer. On admitting so much, constant roaring on the part of the cosmic bull would naturally follow and that would be the acoustic aspect of the Reality identified as *Om* by seers. When there is so much concord among seers that not only

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8 मरुत्वन्तं वृषभं वावृधानं यद् ऽदावयन्ति त ऽदोरवीति।
यदेष सर्वाणि भूतान्यनुप्रविष्टस्तन्मर्त्या आविवेशेति।। *Ibid., V*

9 मरुत्वन्तं वृषभं वावृधानमकवारिं दिव्यं शासमिन्ऽदम्।
विश्वासाहमवसे नूतनायोग्रं सहोदामिह तं हुवेम।। *RV.III.47.5; VI.19.11*

particular images, legends, myths and streams of ideas but even full mantras be common to them to a considerable extent, there is nothing improbable if the bull envisaged as a symbol of *Indra,* and *via* him, of *Om* by a certain seer be used precisely as such by other seers also without mentioning someone or any of the adjuncts associated with the symbolism. This is what *Śaunaka* practically demonstrates by taking the image of the bull from *Viśvāmitra* and *Bharadvāja* and associating the same with that envisioned by *Vāmadeva* in regard to the bull's roaring and entering into the mortals, in case he is taken to have adapted the mantra himself.

The bovine's capacity to symbolise the word in its most fundamental form is evident also from mantras seen by several other seers including *Dīrghatamas.* As has already been discussed in an earlier lecture, the seer has visualised a cow which lows while chiselling waters by moving one step, two steps, four steps, eight steps, nine steps, and intending to become thousand-syllabled in the broadest space. "*It is from her as the resource*", the seer continues in the next mantra, "*that the oceans flow diversely and due to which flow the spaces all around become lively; it is that flow which is responsible for letting the immortal turn into the mortal or the inarticulate get turned into the articulate making all remain sustained in life.*"[10] As is evident from the details about the cow contained in the mantra including her association with the broadest space and serving as the source and sustenance of life on the universal scale, she stands at the root of the Reality. The lowing voice of her, therefore, must be the voice of creation emerging from the central source and expanding in space to the extent of its broadest reach. The process of this expansion has been characterised as both *pāda* and *akṣara* almost synonymously, though literally the former means step while the latter the ultimately irreducible unit of language. Their synonymity in the eye of the seer evinces his view of coincidence between the language and the reality at the apex. Thus the cow in question must be the symbol of *Vāk* while her initial one-footedness may be taken to refer to the monosyllabic primeval word *Om* having compressed in it the potentiality of innumerable words as well as objects.

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10 गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन्।।
तस्याः समुद्रा अधि वि क्षरन्ति तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश्चतस्रः।
ततः क्षरत्यक्षरं तद् विश्वमुप जीवति।। *Ibid., I.164.41-42*

So is the case with another mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*. In this significant mantra referring to the ultimate oneness of all divine beings, it has been stated that when the primeval dawns dawned, the great *akṣara* was born at the step of the cow with the consequence that the rules of the gods came to prevail, the reason behind it being the essential oneness of all the gods.[11] In this mantra also the *akṣara* is said to have emanated from the step of the cow at the dawn of the Dawns of primeval standing. Characterisation of the Dawns as primeval vindicates to their belonging to the beginning of creation coinciding with the Creator's will to create out of the flash of His desire. It is due to oneness of that Ultimate Being that when the cow of *Vāk* symbolising the Creatrix takes her step, the great *akṣara* emanates and the laws of divine beings have their prevalence. In view of the primeval status of the cow, the *akṣara* born of her step cannot but be *Om* as per the Vedic tradition. This conclusion has in its support the adjective *mahat*, great, used with *akṣara*.

There is another mantra seen by *Vasistha*, which talks of three varieties of *Vāk* at the head of which lies a light and which milk honey out of the cow's udder, as it were. The deity of the mantra or indeed of the whole hymn is *Parjanya*, the god of cloud and rain. As such, in the latter half of the mantra, he is said to have impregnated vegetations by placing foetus of calf in their womb and to have roared loudly and continuously as a bull.[12] In view of the details involved in it, the mantra can be explained with reference to cloud, lightning, thunder and rain. *Sāyaṇa*, however, takes the three varieties of *Vāk* in the sense of the three Vedas, namely the *Ṛk*, the *Yajus* and the *Sāman*. In keeping with this interpretation of the three varieties of the *Vāk*, he considers the light lying at the head of them to stand for *Praṇava* or *Om*. There is no denying about it that in view of thunder following lightning, the description of *Vāk* having light in front of it can very well be explained in terms of that sequence of events observed in nature. But it also is to be noted that there is a marked difference between the statement of the Vedic seer on the one hand and that of a man of commonsense on the other concerning almost one and the same scenario. While the man of commonsense remarks about the thing concerned as it is observable to him ordinarily, the Vedic seer speaks about it as it is reflected in his deeper consciousness lying

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11 उषसः पूर्वा अध यद् व्युषुर्महद् वि जज्ञे अक्षरं पदे गोः।
व्रता देवानामुप नु प्रभूषन् महद् देवानामसुरत्वमेकम्।। *Ibid., III.55.1*

12 तिस्रो वाचः प्र वद ज्योतिरग्रा या एतद् दुहे मधुदोघमूधः।
स वत्सं कृण्वन् गर्भमोषधीनां सद्यो जातो वृषभो रौरवीति।। *Ibid., VII.101.1*

beyond the reach of the commonsense. Howsoever trifling an object or event he pays attention to, he penetrates into the utmost depth of it until he reaches the origin of things coinciding with that of the cosmos. Accordingly, though speaking about such an ordinary scenario as that comprising lightning, thunder, cloud and rain, he goes to the root of things behind what is tangible. His statement about ordinary things also, therefore, has to be understood from that viewpoint, as *Sāyaṇa* indeed does here. Light and sound both are associated with the word uttered by *Parjanya*. But by virtue of running faster, light comes at the head of the sound. This is not exclusive to the physical. In the world of spirituality, which the Veda basically represents, light stands for consciousness while sound serves as the medium of its transmission. When cloud has already been taken by the seer as *Parjanya*, the deity, the light emitted by it would naturally have to be taken as the light of the consciousness of the deity, that is, as the divine consciousness. So would be the case with the sound. It too would have to be taken as symbolic of the divine sound. This sound is the same as has been stated by seer *Dīrghatamas* as something lying in the cave, that is, lying beyond the access of the human power of articulation. Such sound has been visualised by the seer as having three grades in it. They have subsequently been termed as *parā, paśyantī* and *madhyamā* while the fourth as *vaikharī*.[13] The light lying at the head of these sounds or grades of *Vāk*, therefore, has to be taken as the light of the purest consciousness represented by *Praṇava* while the sounds themselves as the grades of *Vāk* as understood by the Vedic seer. *Sāyaṇa's* interpretation of the three *Vāks* as *Ṛk, Yajus* and *Sāman* is not so relevant unless, of course, these in themselves are considered as symbolic of these grades of *Vāk*.

It is, thus, in view of the divine consciousness it represents as well as the total span of sound its verbal form *Om* involves, that *Praṇava* has been taken to pervade all the Vedas, both phonetically and semantically. If semantically all grades of consciousness derive from the supernal consciousness, which *Om* symbolises, phonetically all sounds used by humans must trace their origin to some such primeval format of sound which is monosyllabic and yet involves the total capacity of man's organ of articulation in its pronunciation. Hardly can such a sound afford to be any but *Om*. Incidentally it is closest to the bovine's format of lowing. This seems to be one of the main reasons why bull in particular has been

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13 चत्वारि वाक्परिमिता पदानि तानि बिदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति।। *Ibid.,I.164.45*

chosen by the Vedic seer to serve as a symbol of *Om* and has been conceived to have entered into the mortals having reduced himself to the form of the calf by withdrawing his horns in particular. Other features of the bull, which possibly facilitated his choice as the symbol of *Om*, include his power of procreation and self-dissemination. It is when *Vāk* got fertilised by *Om*, that she bore him out in diverse forms resulting in the development of language. This is why while bull is used to symbolise *Om*, cow has been made the symbol of *Vāk* so copiously in the Veda.

Ventures of Angiras

1

Just as the uniformity of the laws of nature indicates to a common origin of all things in the cosmos and the uniformity among a large number of languages spoken in as distantly placed regions as India and Europe have veritably suggested to a common origin of all of them in the Old Indo-European, even so the amazing uniformity of myths, legends, ideas and idioms prevailing in the whole of the Veda, notwithstanding hundreds of seers involved in its authorship, points to a common source operative behind this literary colossus which has been moulding the human mind most extensively since untold ages. That mighty primeval source can be identified in the person of seer *Aṅgiras*.

Of course, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* traces the lineage of the exponents of the Vedic knowledge from *Brahma* to *Angiras via Atharvan*, *Aṅgir* and *Bharadvāja*.[1] As per this *Upaniṣad*, the lineage comprises *Brahma*, *Atharvan, Angir, Bharadvāja* and *Angiras*. The *Praśna Upaniṣad*, however, is more precise and down to the earth in pointing to *Atharvan* and *Angiras* as the oldest of the seers. While praying to the most essential *Prāṇa* operating in man, the sage describes it as the best bearer of gods and the first *Svadhā*, self-content, meant for the Fathers as well as the truthful operation in seers beginning from *Atharvan* and *Aṅgiras* .[2] Evidently this *Upaniṣad* does not mention *Angir* and *Bharadvāja* and comes down to *Aṅgiras* and associates him directly with *Atharvan*. As regards *Aṅgir*, it is quite probable that he was the father of *Angiras* but he does not seem to have been prominent enough to have found mention in the Vedas excepting here in the *Upaniṣad*. So far as *Bharadvāja* is concerned, he, in the *Ṛgveda*, characterises himself as the most inspired amongst the *Āṅgirasas* reciting honey-sweetened mantra in course of sacrifice.[3]

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1 ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संवभूव विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता।
सं ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठामथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह।।
अथर्वणे यां प्रवदेत् ब्रह्माथर्वा तां पुरोवाचाङ्गिरे ब्रह्मविद्याम्।
स भरद्वाजाय सत्यवाहाय प्राह भरद्वाजोऽङ्गिरसे परावराम्।।*Mund.Up.I.1-2*

2 देवानामसि वह्नितमः पितृणां प्रथमा स्वधा।
ऋषीणां चरितं सत्यमथर्वाङ्गिरसामसि।।*Praśna Up. II.8*

3 वेपिष्ठो अङ्गिरसां यद्ध विप्रो मधुच्छन्दो भर्नति रेभ इष्टौ।।*RV. VI.11.3*

It is quite possible that *Bharadvāja* describes himself as *Angiras* on account of having been the son of *Aṅgir*. But, as per other evidences, it is more probable that he came after *Aṅgiras* rather than immediately after *Aṅgir*. Leaving this controversy apart on account of paucity of evidence to decide it with any sense of finality, it is certain from one of the mantras seen by a descendant of *Aṅgiras* himself, namely, *Hiraṇyastūpa Āṅgirasa*, that *Aṅgiras* was almost unprecedented in seerhood as he has been referred to as the primeval model amongst seers for his devotion to *Agni* along with *Manu* and *Yayāti* as that amongst sacrificers.[4] Since *Manu* and *Yayāti* were kings, it was *Aṅgiras* alone who has been recognised as a seer devoted to *Agni* at that antiquity. This conclusion gets confirmed by another mantra seen by *Gotama Rāhūgaṇa* who refers to *Āṅgirasas* to have derived vitality first by kindling fire with the application of noble action and latent power of ignition.[5] Along with the *Āṅgirasas* if he names anyone else to have extended the path of sacrifice, that is the seer *Atharvan*.[6] From the description of the seer it is obvious that he makes a distinction between the contributions of *Āṅgirasas* and *Atharvan* in the establishment of the institution of sacrifice. While *Atharvan* is said to have extended the path of sacrifice, the *Āṅgirasas* are said to have kindled fire out of the wood known as *Śamī* and with the application of noble deeds. Kindling of fire is done prior to the actual act of sacrifice. Finding out the *Śamī*wood which apparently is cool in touch and even then to rub one piece of it against the other to make fire emanate out of it, is really one of the greatest discoveries mankind has made so far. Application of fire thus produced is a task relatively less exciting and in any case posterior to the former. Thus, though *Atharvan* and *Aṅgiras* have been referred to as contemporaries and there too *Atharvan* has been mentioned prior to *Aṅgiras* , the latter's accomplishment is more radical and astounding than that of the former even in its apparent form and not to talk of the deeper sense to be made out subsequently with reference to the latter halves of these mantras as well as many more of them.

As another evidence to bear out the antiquity of *Aṅgiras* is a mantra seen by *Viśvāmitra*. *Viśvāmitra* is one of the oldest seers of the *Ṛgveda*, as he is the seer of the third *maṇḍala* of the *Samhitā*. In the mantra concerned, he observes that he is going to renew *Indra* of primeval origin by means of

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4 मनुष्वदग्ने अङ्गिरस्वदङ्गिरो ययातिवत् सदने पूर्ववच्छुचे।
अच्छ याह्यावहा दैव्यं जनमासादय बर्हिषि यक्षि च प्रियम्।। *Ibid.,I.31.17*

5 आदङ्गिराः प्रथमं दधिरे वय इद्ब्राग्नेयः शम्या ये सुकृत्यया। *Ibid.,I.83.4*

6 यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि। *Ibid.,I.83.5*

worship performed with obeisance on the pattern set by *Aṅgiras*.[7] The statement suggests that already by the time of *Viśvāmitra* the seer *Aṅgiras* had become a legend and so prominent as to have been sought to be emulated by him. *Viśvāmitra* feels as if he were just a renewer of the personality of *Indra* already discovered and established by *Aṅgiras*. So is the case with *Nābhāka Kaṇva*. He observes that he is reciting a fresh prayer to *Indra* and *Agni* on the pattern of *Māndhātṛ* and *Aṅgiras* as a child acts on the pattern set by its father.[8] Since by virtue of having been a king *Māndhātṛ* has been named here as the sacrificer, it is *Aṅgiras* alone who may be supposed to have acted as the seer. There is another mantra seen by *Parucchepa* in which *Angiras* has been mentioned along with *Dadhyaṅ, Priyamedha, Kaṇva, Atri* and *Manu*. It has also been pointed out in the same mantra that these seers had long association with gods and that they formed the axis around which the subsequent seers, including *Parucchepa*, moved in ideas as the wheel moves around its axle.[9] No doubt all the seers mentioned here are senior to *Parucchepa*, but the qualification of *Angiras* as the most primeval amongst them also suggests to his unparalleled antiquity.

Among some other seers mentioned together along with *Angiras* are *Priyamedha, Atri* and *Virūpa* while the name of the seer referring to them is *Praskaṇva*. He prays to *Agni* to respond to his prayer as he did in the case of these seers.[10] This reference once more confirms the fact that by the time of *Praskaṇva, Angiras* along with these seers had become so much established as to be regarded as worth emulating on account of having been nearer to the reality of gods.

There is a hymn seen by *Yama*, the son of *Vivasvat* which refers to *Angiras* as entering into close interaction with gods. The interaction between the human and the divine as visualised by the seer of the hymn is so close that he feels as if the divine itself is speaking through him having taken him up as its mouthpiece. Consequently the name of the seer comes to coincide with that of the god. Having thus established his complete identity with the god, the seer under the pseudonym of the

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7 तमङ्गिरस्वन्नमसा सपर्यन् नव्यं कृणोमि सन्यसे पुराजाम्। *Ibid.,III.31.19*

8 एवेन्द्राग्निभ्यां पितृवन्नवीयो मान्धातृवदङ्गिरस्वदवाचि। *Ibid., VIII.40.12*

9 दध्यङ् ह मे जनुषं पूर्वो अङ्गिराः प्रियमेधः कण्वो अत्रिर्मनुर्विदुस्ते
मे पूर्वे मनुर्विदुः। तेषां देवेष्वायतिरस्माकं तेषु नाभयः।। *Ibid.,I.139.9*

10 प्रियमेधवदत्रिवत् जातवेदो विरूपवत्।
अङ्गिरस्वन्महिव्रत प्रस्कण्वदस्य श्रुधी हवम्।। *Ibid.,I.45.3*

latter points out that it is *Yama* who first of all discovered the path of righteousness which is sure to lead one to unassailable state of things. It is by taking to that path, the seer adds, that the primeval generation of mankind reached that state of things which indeed was the state of self-fulfilment.[11] The path, as indicated by the seer, lies in proper reciprocity between the human and the divine.

In this regard, the seer mentions certain pairs of humans and divinities as benefactors and beneficiaries of each other. Such pairs, as pointed out by the seer, are *Mātali* and *Kāvyās, Yama* and *Āṅgirasas, Bṛhaspati* and *Ṛkvas. Mātali, Yama* and *Brhaspati* are the gods while *Kavyās, Āṅgirasas* and *Ṛkvas* are human beings. *Kavyās* are associated with performance of sacrifice while *Ṛkvas* seem to have been concerned with recitation of mantras. The remaining *Āṅgirasas* as associated with *Yama*, their divine counterpart, seem to have been dealers with the hard realities of life. *Yama* is the god of universal control particularly as operating in life. As such, his human counterparts can justifiably be taken as path-makers from within the arduous course of life. The Veda, as the universal path of life, may be taken as the result of the venture of the *Āṅgirasas* in this regard. Herein lies their unique seerhood. They not only prepared the path for others to traverse but themselves led the whole travail. The fundamental principle of life as laid down in the mantra concerned is the balanced reciprocity between gods and humans. While humans serve gods by means of their act of *Svāhā*, gods extend their help to mankind in the form of the act of *Svadhā. Svāhā* is the self-giving amounting to surrender to the Divine made on the part of human beings. As complementary to it, *Svadhā* is the gesture of gods shown in favour of human beings for their self-sustenance. Thus while through their self-surrender to the Divine, the humans open the gate of their self-transformation, the divine beings through their gesture of *Svadhā* help the humans in remaining sustained in their beings so as to get transformed.[12] That *Svadhā* is something operative on the relatively lower rung of creation, is evident from the celebrated *Hymn of Creation* also where the seer states that in course of creation *Svadhā* operated from below while regulation worked from above.[13] In terms of the mantra under consideration, while *Yama* may be

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11 यमो नो गातुं प्रथमो विवेद नैषा गव्यूतिरपभर्तवा उ।
यत्रा नः पूर्वे पितरः परेयुरेना जज्ञानाः पथ्या३ अनुस्वाः।। *Ibid.,X.14.2.*

12 मातली कव्यैर्यमो अङ्गिरोभिर्बृहस्पतिर्ऋक्वभिर्वावृधानः।
यांश्च देवा वावृधुर्ये च देवान्त्स्वाहान्ये स्वधयान्ये मदन्ति।। *Ibid.,X.14.3*

13 स्वधा अवस्तात् प्रयतिः परस्तात्। *Ibid.,X.129.5*

taken as an embodiment of *Prayati*, regulation, *Angiras* may be supposed to represent *Svadhā* .

The validity of the principle of reciprocity between the human and the Divine as envisaged by *Yama*, the seer, in this mantra, is evident from *Vyasa's* restatement and assertion of it in the *Bhagavadgītā*. Declaring sacrifice as the basic principle of sustenance of creation, makes out the *Gita*, the Creator exhorted upon created beings to keep on performing it for getting multiplied. He further has asked them to use it as a means of mutual co-operation between gods and humans.[14]

The reciprocity between *Yama* and *Āṅgirasas* results in the latter's elevation to the position of the primeval Fatherhood. It was owing to their having prepared the noble path of life and having themselves trodden it first of all getting thus coincided with *Yama* himself. This is reflected in the next mantra of the hymn where *Yama* has been prayed to come to the comprehensive meeting ground of sacrifice and take his honourable seat there in perfect harmony with the *Āṅgirasas*, the revered Fathers.[15] Having become transformed, the *Āṅgirasas* are now considered to have risen to the status coeval to that of the Divine and hence have become worthy of sharing in the sacrificial offerings with gods.[16]

The *Āṅgirasas*, however, are not alone in their elevation to the status approximate to that of the divinities. As is evident from the next mantra of the hymn, they have *Atharvans* and *Bhṛgus* to accompany them there. All of them have become *Navagvas* and just like the gods. The word *navagva* has been taken by *Sāyaṇa* to mean the treader of the new path. With all its feasibility in substance, however, this interpretation looks dubious in view of the use of the word *daśagva* also in similar contexts. As such, *nava* of *navagva* cannot afford to mean anything but the numeral nine. But since the words *navagva* and *daśagva* have been used to indicate to the state of highest achievements the Vedic seers were able to reach, they have not to be taken in the apparent sense of possession of nine and ten cows. They have to be associated with the steps of the cow of *Vāk* taking

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14 सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्।।
देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ।। *Bhagavadgītā III.10-11*

15 इमं यम प्रस्तरमा हि सीदाङ्गिरोभिः पितृभिः संविदानः। *RV.X.14.*

16 अङ्गिरोभिरा गहि यज्ञियेभि र्यम वैरूपैरिह मादयस्व। *Ibid.,X.14.5*

one step, two steps, four steps, eight steps, nine steps and ultimately rising to the state of the thousand-syllabled in the highest heaven, as the oft-quoted mantra seen by *Dīrghatamas* recounts.[17] On the basis of the import of this mantra, we can fairly well make out that *navagva* means the state of highest development of man in his consciousness as a human being while *daśagva* indicates to his elevation to the status of the Divine. This interpretation is based on the fact that while nine is the greatest of the numerals of one digit, ten is the beginning of those of two digits with their culmination in the infinity. The developmental process remains slow up to the limit of the human nature, as it is true of the numerals of one digit. But, as soon as the limit of the human is crossed, things grow by leaps and bounds. *Navagva* and *Daśagva* most probably symbolise these two respective spans of growth in the human consciousness.

Vāmadeva, the seer of the fourth *maṇdala* of the *Ṛgveda*, also refers to *Angiras* as a seer of the dawn of knowledge and hence as that of remote antiquity from his standpoint as well. He prays to *Uṣas as* to bring back that state of things in which they made that light of theirs available to *Navagva* and *Daśagva Aṅgiras* who was seven-mouthed.[18] There is no doubt about it that *Vāmadeva* is one of the greatest seers of the Vedic age belonging particularly to its early phase. His antiquity and height of attainment both are indisputable. As such, his prayer for return of the same illumination as it was made available to *Aṅgiras* has got special significance. It bears out *Vāmadeva's* cognisance of the eminence of *Aṅgiras* in regard to spiritual attainments surpassing his own even. The adjectives *Navagva* and *Daśagva* used by him for the elder seer show how, in his view, the latter had not only reached the highest point in spirituality possible for him as a man but had even crossed the human limitations and had elevated himself to the area of the Divine. His being described as seven-mouthed is also highly significant. Mouth is associated with *Vāk* and *Prāṇa*. It is the sole passage of *Vāk* and the main one of *Prāṇa*. Blowing of *Prāṇa* through the nose is only a diversion obviously meant for associating the sense of smell with the *Prāṇa*. Attribution of seven mouths, instead of the normal one, to *Aṅgiras* by *Vāmadeva* does, therefore, imply on his part recognition of *Aṅgiras '* stupendous power of *Prāṇa* and *Vāk*. As regards *Prāṇa*, we have already seen how *Aṅgiras* and his son *Ayāsya* were deeply involved in the *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* through

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17 *Ibid., I.164.41*

18 कुवित् स दैवीः सनयो नवौ वा यामौ बभूयादुषसो वो अद्य।
येना नवग्वे अङ्गिरे दशग्वे सप्तास्यै रेवती रेवदूष। । *Ibid.,IV.51.4*

it passing through the mouth, as has been recounted in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. On the basis of the *Chāndogya's* derivation of the word *ayāsya*, it can very well be imagined that the son was named by the father partly due to his own involvement in the *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* and partly due to his son's subsequently.[19] Since the *Prāṇa* involved in this *sādhanā* is not supposed to bear any smell or sound with it, it has to be realised in its absolute stillness and quietude and thus to get coincided with self-consciousness merging with the will of the Creator resulting in the dynamics of the universe. It is this *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* taken up to its full possibility that has made *Angiras* the mouthpiece of *Vāk*, the Vedic word uttered so abundantly as to be supposed to have required no less than seven mouths to have been poured out. This was the consequence of the dawn of knowledge on the primeval seer for attaining to which height even a seer of the eminence of *Vāmadeva* is so much eager.

Another indication to the *sādhanā* possibly undertaken by *Angiras* is to be found in the *Yajurveda*. In the mantra concerned it has been observed that *Kruñ Aṅgirasa* drank milk separating it from and drawing it out of water by means of the core of his intellect and that it was done through the application of the principle of *Ṛta*. This truth has further been characterised as *Soma* juice squeezed out of the creeper and serving as the drink of immortality favourite to *Indra*.[20] In this mantra a descendant of *Aṅgiras* has been conceived as a swan lapping up the juice of the lotus stalk out of water. Through this figurative expression, the seer is supposed to have drawn truth out of what he received from the outside world through his senses. This truth is conceived as the real *Soma*, which is liked so much by *Indra* and is partaken of by the sacrificer as the juice of immortality. What concerns us most in this highly significant account at the moment is the association of it with the name of a descendant of *Angiras* and, *via* him, with that of the latter himself. Since the tradition of any particular seer was formed by strict following of him by his descendants and disciples, any *sādhanā* attributed to the latter may in its fundamentals be traced back to the original seer himself. If allowed to be done so, this figurative account would tell us volumes about the mode of

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19 तं हाङ्गिरा उद्गीथमुपासां च॰के। तमु एवाङ्गिरसं मन्यन्तेऽङ्गानां य॰दसः। .....
तेन तं हायास्य उद्गीथमुपासां च॰के। एतमु एवायास्यं मन्यन्ते
आस्याद्यदयते। *Ch.Up.I.2.10 and 12*

20 अद्भ्यः क्षीरं व्यपिवत् ॰कुङ्गाङ्गिरसो धिया।
ऋतेनं सत्यमिन्॰द्रियं विपानं शु॰कमन्धस इन्॰दस्येन्॰द्रियमिदं पयोऽमृतं मधु।। *YV.XIX.73*

sādhanā Angiras would have adopted for attaining to seerhood. Precisely this *sādhanā* seems to have concerned itself with the gathering of fundamental truths and principles, obviously as related to life and the world, out of the sense perception as available to the person concerned: While the ordinary man gets too much involved with the immediate consequences of what he perceives, the seer in the making as well as in the state of his full accomplishment draws out of those perceptions what is of universal significance and of abiding interest. This feat on the part of the seer requires utmost exercise of the power of discrimination. It is in view of possession and exercise of this power that *Āṅgirasa* has been described here in this mantra as a swan capable of lapping up the milky juice out of water, which any other bird is incapable of accomplishing.

It is significant to note the mutually complementary character of the two *sādhanās*. The *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* is concerned with the exploration of the essence of one's being by diving inside oneself. This *sādhanā* naturally is made possible by keeping in abeyance whatever impinges on one's consciousness from outside. It, thus, involves complete withdrawal from at least the half of the reality. The relevance of the latter *sādhanā*, on the other hand, lies in compensating for this lacuna. The association of *Angiras* with both these forms of *sādhanā*, thus, gives us an inkling into the integrality of his approach on account of which he has left his indelible impact on the entire Vedic tradition.

That the tradition laid down by *Angiras* is based primarily on deep meditation as well as profound action is evident directly from a mantra seen by his famous son *Ayāsya*. He begins the hymn concerned with the observation that his father has obtained the seven-horned wisdom which is born of *Ṛta* and is highly comprehensive while he himself having acquired the potentiality of universality has produced the inexplicable fourth in course of making prayer to *Indra*.[21] That *Ṛta* and *Indra* are almost synonymous to him is evident from the next mantra in which he observes that while meditating straightaway and saying prayer to *Ṛta* the descendants of *Angiras*, as sons of the heaven and heroes of the Mighty, have acquired the status of the seer and have envisaged the sacred institution of sacrifice.[22] It is through contemplation and meditation on

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21 इमां धियं सप्तशीर्ष्णीं पिता नऋतप्रजातां बृहतीमविन्दत्।
तुरीयं स्विदजनयद्विश्वजन्यो ऽ यास्य उक्थमिन्द्राय शंसन्।। *RV.X.67.1*

22 ऋतं शंसन्त ऋजु दीध्यानाः दिवस्पुत्रासो असुरस्य वीराः।
विप्रं पदमङ्गिरसो दधाना यज्ञस्य धाम प्रथमं मनन्त।। *Ibid.,X.67.2*

Ṛta that these descendants of *Aṅgiras* have attained to the Ultimate Reality indicated to here by the cryptic expression `*the fourth inexplicable one*' on the one hand and have conceived of the institution of sacrifice as a way to meet the requirements of life and the world on the other. While meditation on *Ṛta* leading to the discovery of the inexplicable Fourth is the inner path of *Praṇava sādhanā*, envisagement of the institution of sacrifice is partly at least the result of the *sādhanā* of adjustment of the internal with the external.

Referring to the spectacular attainments and contributions of *Aṅgiras* to the institution of sacrifice as well as to the path of man's enlightenment, seer *Mānava* has put on record how *Aṅgiras* having been born at the primeval stage has recited and chanted prayers here on this earth so as to make even the slabs of stone look upward to the harmless institution of sacrifice, and at the same time has himself got enlightened in his outlook and infinitely enlarged in consciousness besides wielding his axe of wisdom to make the world worth living.[23]

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23 रेभदत्रे जनुषा पूर्वो अङ्गिरा ग्रावाण ऊर्ध्वा अभि चक्षुरध्वरम्।
येभिर्विहाया अभवद्विचक्षणः पार्थः सुमेकं स्वधितिर्वनेन्वति।। *Ibid.,X.92.15*

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As we have seen in the immediately preceding lecture, *Angiras* veritably was a seer in full flesh and blood pursuing a definite course of *Sādhanā* with enormous spiritual attainments besides being the progenitor of a long and mighty lineage of seers. Even then, however, he very often has been referred to and even described in such a way that *prima facie* he appears to have been other than a human being. Amongst such references and descriptions is the representation of him as something identical to fire. Such references are spread over the entire *Samhitā* and the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. The very sixth mantra of the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, for instance, in course of praying to *Agni*, addresses him as *Angiras* particularly in view of his truthfulness. The criterion of the truthfulness of *Agni*, according to the seer of the mantra, lies in doing good to the worshipper.[1] Accordingly, *Agni's* truthfulness lies in responding favourably to the prayer of the devotee which in its turn obliges one to address him as *Aṅgiras* .. This is what seer *Madhucchandas* has done. Even much more than that has been done by another seer who belongs to the lineage of *Aṅgiras* himself as is evident from his ancestral name *Aṅgiras* besides his real name having been given as *Hiraṇyastūpa*. He describes *Agni* as the first and the best *Aṅgirasa* besides being the poet of gods and guardian of the laws of the divine.[2] The secret of identification of *Agni* with *Aṅgiras* seems here to lie in the common qualification of them as a poet. It is quite understandable that while *Aṅgiras* was a poet by virtue of being a seer of mantras used in the invocation of gods, *Agni* was considered so on account of providing necessary help in materialising the mission of mantras. But, to think of the concluding part of the mantra, how was it possible for *Aṅgiras* to have been effective in adorning the divine laws in common with *Agni*? So far as *Agni* is concerned, he can adorn the divine laws on account of himself being one of the divinities. But, being a human being, how can *Aṅgiras* do the same so as to have led *Agni* to be called *Aṅgiras*? A kind of solution to this problem can be seen in the preceding mantras of the hymn where *Hiraṇyastūpa* describes *Agni* as the first *Aṅgiras* seer and as such to have

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1 यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि।
तवेत्तत् सत्यमङ्गिरः॥ *RV.I.1.6*

2 त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरस्तमः कविर्देवानां परिभूषसि व्रतम्। *Ibid.,I.31.2*

become friendly with gods, particularly as he himself was a god.[3] If *Agni* was friendly to gods by virtue of being himself a god, *Aṅgiras* became so on account of having attained to seerhood. When some sort of identity like this gets visualised between the seer and the god, the seer becomes liable to be referred to as a god and inversely the god becomes liable to be referred to as a seer. Moreover, the equation between the two, otherwise entirely different orders of beings, does not remain confined to the denominational level. Over and above that, once established, it begins to operate as an actuality making seers be treated as gods and gods be treated as seers. If *Āmbhṛṇī*, the celebrated daughter of seer *Ambhṛṇa*, could claim to move in the company of *Rudras, Vasus* and *Ādityas* and to have created the Father of the creation himself simply on account of having realised her essential oneness with the Divine, it is just the inverse part of the same experience that makes a particular divine being be addressed as a human seer.

But the peculiar thing with *Aṅgiras* is that he in particular is associated with *Agni* and consequently the latter has come to be addressed after the seer's name rather most frequently. This has been done not only by seers belonging to the lineage of *Angiras* such as *Hiraṇyastūpa*, but also by those of other lineages such as *Parucchepa* belonging to the lineage of *Divodasa*. He, for instance, observes that he along with other sacrificers has invoked *Agni*, the eldest of the *Aṅgirasas* and the inspired seer besides. An additional clue to the address of *Agni* as *Aṅgiras*, and at that the eldest one, can be had in the last part of this hemistich of the mantra in which the mantras have been given the adjective *Vipra*, the inspired seer.[4] Obviously addressing mantras as *vipras* is due to the former having been seen by the latter in the state of inspiration which depended on the establishment of closest intimacy of the seer with the object of his seeing.

This point is highly significant in the proper understanding of the Vedic accounts of relationship between the Divine and the human. As far back as the human memory goes, the Divine has usually been taken as a being absolutely different from the human and as existing at a considerable distance from the latter, as is evident from His assignment to the heaven existing far away from the earth as well as from the horizon. If that were the sole truth, it would be difficult to think of any meeting ground

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3 त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरा ऋषिर्देवो देवानामभवः शिवः सखा। *Ibid.,I.31.1*

4 यजिष्ठं त्वा यजमाना हुवेम ज्येष्ठमङ्गिरसां विप्र मन्मभिः
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between the earthly human and the heavenly Divine. But, contrary to it, what actually is true is that the human has always been seeing his fulfilment in praying to and contemplating on the Divine resulting, as if, in his drawing close to Him at least after death, to prove the verity of which, however, there is no tangible evidence. But, in the Vedic tradition, there are numerous references and accounts bearing out intimate relationship between the human and the Divine going to the extent of the human becoming the Divine and the latter playing the role of the former. Besides the case of *Āmbhṛṇī* referred to already, we have those of *Vasistha* sitting in the same boat as *Varuṇa* and enjoying swinging on the waves of the sea,[5] of *Virūpa Angirasa* praying to *Agni* either to take him up into itself or itself assume the form of him,[6] and of *Viśvāmitra* claiming to be *Agni* itself, being all-knowing inherently from his birth and having *ghṛta* as his eyes and the drink of immortality in his mouth besides being the measurer of space, the unaging special vessel of milk as also the oblation.[7]

The seer's experience of his identity with the Divine as well as that of the latter's oneness with the seer, has a psychology of its own lacking in the cognisance of which scholars have advanced a plethora of views giving rise to various sorts of misunderstanding regarding the actual state of things. Animatism, Animism, Fetishism and Personification are some of the more important words coined or used in this connection to describe this peculiar situation. The upholders of Animatism are of view that the intimacy between the human and the Divine is due to attribution of some sort of consciousness in some of the more impressive objects in Nature such as the sun, the moon, the dawn, the fire, etc. By virtue of being supposed to share consciousness with man, they maintain, these natural objects are taken to be close to human beings and as responsive to the latter's prayers, persuasions and projections of relationships with the possibility of culminating even in interchangeability and identification. The propounders of Animism go a step further in explaining the phenomenon in terms of attribution of some sort of spirit happening to embody itself for the time being in these spectacles of Nature and thus opening the way to the supposition of man's relationship with them

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5 आ यद् रुहाव वरुणश्च नावं प्र यत् समुद्रमीरयाव मध्यम्।
अधि यदपां स्नुभिश्चरावप्र प्रेङ्ख ईङ्खयावहै शुभे कम्। । *Ibid., VII.88.3*

6 यदग्ने स्यामहं त्वं त्वं वा घा स्या अहम्। स्युष्टे सत्या इहाशिषः। । *Ibid., VIII.44.23*

7 अग्निरस्मि जन्मना जातवेदा घृतं मे चक्षुरमृतं म आसन्।
अर्कस्त्रिधातू रजसो विमानोऽजस्रो घर्मो हविरस्मि नाम। । *Ibid., III.26.7*

developing to any degree of intimacy. The exponents of Fetishism, on the other hand, explain the possibility of interaction between the Divine and the human by the supposition of certain objects as divine on account of being taken to have been indwelt by a certain spirit wandering disembodied otherwise. Since these spirts are supposed to have belonged to humans at some point or the other, they may be taken as amenable to interaction with them. Upholders of the view of Personification contend that there is no necessity at all of the supposition of any sort of ensoulment of the objects in Nature for the possibility of their interaction with human beings. What, instead of all this, looks most plausible to them is that being ignorant of the workings of Nature people in the hoary past have projected their own personalities on these objects outside and in view of their eminence as compared to their own humbleness they have accorded to the former the status of gods and goddesses and have aspired to have some sort of intimate relationship with them so as to derive help from them whenever required.

There is no doubt about it that the human mind has worked differently as well as similarly in course of the long history of its life on this planet in keeping with the variety of the situations faced as also its own state of development and equipment. As such, it is quite possible that each one of these explanations fits in well with the situation at least under which it emerged and from which it drew the data necessary for its formulation. But to assert anyone of them in place of all of them taking it as the sole explanation of the entire phenomenon in all its perspectives is to side-track the issue really involved. It concerns not any particular belief cherished anywhere in any section of the society but the basic nature of consciousness and the mode of its working particularly in situations involving the sense of identity between the source and the object of the consciousness, that is, the subject and the object. The subject and the object obviously are entirely different from each other in the same way as are the eater and the edible. Against this solid background the possibility of oneness between the subject and the object is something astounding. Had it been casual, it could possibly be explained as something abnormal taking place as an aberration of mind. But when it occurs as something recurrent over as vast a period as the composition of the mantras on the one side and at least the discourses of the *Upaniṣads* on the other involving hundreds of seers and sages spread over at least a million square kilometres, as the Vedic geography was, it calls for an explanation comprehensive and plausible enough to do justice to it.

For such an explanation, however, one has not to hunt for anywhere else but to look into the text itself and reconstruct it strictly on the basis of what is available in the Veda in this regard. According to the Veda, the human and the Divine are by no means exclusive of each other. Being an epitome of the reality, manifest and unmanifest both, the human is inclusive of the Divine as well as of the human besides even the animal. As such, while seeing the Divine in anything, in the fire, for instance, the Vedic seer is not required to impute falsely any animation to it nor ensoulment of it by any extraneous agency. Nor has he to label any false personality to it. Instead of doing anything like this, he has to look well within himself and scan if anything corresponding to fire is operating there in his consciousness. Power of consumption and illumination being the basic functions of fire in its physical form, these functions are looked for in one's own consciousness itself and are identified upward in the higher consciousness which seemingly emerges out of the physical and the sensory but as a matter of fact exists in its own right in that consciousness and only percolates in the lower strata of our being including the sensory and the physical. By virtue of its percolation in the lower strata it puts itself in a position to take up and transform the physical and the sensory into the illumination of the higher consciousness. When *Viśvāmitra*, for instance, talks of the presence of Agni on the earth, inside the earth, in vegetations, in the heaven, as well as within the human individual operating as the observer of everything, he obviously could not have done so without having understood the possibility of one and the same fire working on all planes of being including the physical and the spiritual. Moreover, by virtue of having understood fire as the basic principle of cosmic creation itself, as is evident from the mantra concerned, he could not but take cognisance of its inherent presence on all planes of our being including the physical, mental and spiritual.[8]

Cognisance of the inner observer and that also as a form of fire, opens the way to one's identification of oneself with *Agni*. And this by no means is peculiar to *Viśvāmitra*. Instances of it can be adduced from very many other seers also. This being a matter of inner experience of seers, to trace any developmental process behind this idea is superfluous. This is obvious from its presence in its entire implication in seer *Aṅgiras* himself. In spite of having been the earliest Vedic seer extant, he evinces his full

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8 अग्ने यत् ते दिवि वर्चः पृथिव्यां यदोषधीष्वप्स्वा यजत्र।
येनान्तरिक्षमुर्वाततन्थ त्वेषः स भानुरर्णवो नृचक्षाः।। *Ibid.III,22.2*

sādhanā Angiras would have adopted for attaining to seerhood. Precisely this *sādhanā* seems to have concerned itself with the gathering of fundamental truths and principles, obviously as related to life and the world, out of the sense perception as available to the person concerned: While the ordinary man gets too much involved with the immediate consequences of what he perceives, the seer in the making as well as in the state of his full accomplishment draws out of those perceptions what is of universal significance and of abiding interest. This feat on the part of the seer requires utmost exercise of the power of discrimination. It is in view of possession and exercise of this power that *Āṅgirasa* has been described here in this mantra as a swan capable of lapping up the milky juice out of water, which any other bird is incapable of accomplishing.

It is significant to note the mutually complementary character of the two *sādhanās*. The *sādhanā* of *Praṇava* is concerned with the exploration of the essence of one's being by diving inside oneself. This *sādhanā* naturally is made possible by keeping in abeyance whatever impinges on one's consciousness from outside. It, thus, involves complete withdrawal from at least the half of the reality. The relevance of the latter *sādhanā,* on the other hand, lies in compensating for this lacuna. The association of *Angiras* with both these forms of *sādhanā*, thus, gives us an inkling into the integrality of his approach on account of which he has left his indelible impact on the entire Vedic tradition.

That the tradition laid down by *Angiras* is based primarily on deep meditation as well as profound action is evident directly from a mantra seen by his famous son *Ayāsya*. He begins the hymn concerned with the observation that his father has obtained the seven-horned wisdom which is born of *Ṛta* and is highly comprehensive while he himself having acquired the potentiality of universality has produced the inexplicable fourth in course of making prayer to *Indra.*[21] That *Ṛta* and *Indra* are almost synonymous to him is evident from the next mantra in which he observes that while meditating straightaway and saying prayer to *Ṛta* the descendants of *Angiras*, as sons of the heaven and heroes of the Mighty, have acquired the status of the seer and have envisaged the sacred institution of sacrifice.[22] It is through contemplation and meditation on

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21 इमां धियं॑ सप्तशीर्ष्णीं पिता नॅ ऋतप्रजातां बृहतीमविन्दत्।
तुरीयं स्विदजनयद्विश्वजॅन्यो ऽ यास्य उक्थमिन्॒दाय शंसॅन्। । *RV.X.67.1*

22 ऋतं शंसॅन्त ऋजु दीध्यानाः दिवस्पुत्रासो असुॅरस्य वीराः।
विप्रं पदमङ्गिरसो दधाना यज्ञस्य धामं प्रथमं मनन्त। । *Ibid.,X.67.2*

Ṛta that these descendants of *Aṅgiras* have attained to the Ultimate Reality indicated to here by the cryptic expression `*the fourth inexplicable one*' on the one hand and have conceived of the institution of sacrifice as a way to meet the requirements of life and the world on the other. While meditation on *Ṛta* leading to the discovery of the inexplicable Fourth is the inner path of *Praṇava sādhanā*, envisagement of the institution of sacrifice is partly at least the result of the *sādhanā* of adjustment of the internal with the external.

Referring to the spectacular attainments and contributions of *Aṅgiras* to the institution of sacrifice as well as to the path of man's enlightenment, seer *Mānava* has put on record how *Aṅgiras* having been born at the primeval stage has recited and chanted prayers here on this earth so as to make even the slabs of stone look upward to the harmless institution of sacrifice, and at the same time has himself got enlightened in his outlook and infinitely enlarged in consciousness besides wielding his axe of wisdom to make the world worth living.[23]

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23 रेभदत्रे जनुषा पूर्वो अङ्गिरा ग्रावाण ऊर्ध्वा अभि चक्षुरध्वरम्।
येभिर्विहोया अभवद्विचक्षणः पार्थः सुमेकं स्वधितिर्वनेन्वति।। *Ibid.,X.92.15*

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As we have seen in the immediately preceding lecture, *Angiras* veritably was a seer in full flesh and blood pursuing a definite course of *Sādhanā* with enormous spiritual attainments besides being the progenitor of a long and mighty lineage of seers. Even then, however, he very often has been referred to and even described in such a way that *prima facie* he appears to have been other than a human being. Amongst such references and descriptions is the representation of him as something identical to fire. Such references are spread over the entire *Samhitā* and the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. The very sixth mantra of the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, for instance, in course of praying to *Agni*, addresses him as *Angiras* particularly in view of his truthfulness. The criterion of the truthfulness of *Agni*, according to the seer of the mantra, lies in doing good to the worshipper.[1] Accordingly, *Agni's* truthfulness lies in responding favourably to the prayer of the devotee which in its turn obliges one to address him as *Aṅgiras* .. This is what seer *Madhucchandas* has done. Even much more than that has been done by another seer who belongs to the lineage of *Aṅgiras* himself as is evident from his ancestral name *Aṅgiras* besides his real name having been given as *Hiraṇyastūpa*. He describes *Agni* as the first and the best *Aṅgirasa* besides being the poet of gods and guardian of the laws of the divine.[2] The secret of identification of *Agni* with *Aṅgiras* seems here to lie in the common qualification of them as a poet. It is quite understandable that while *Aṅgiras* was a poet by virtue of being a seer of mantras used in the invocation of gods, *Agni* was considered so on account of providing necessary help in materialising the mission of mantras. But, to think of the concluding part of the mantra, how was it possible for *Aṅgiras* to have been effective in adorning the divine laws in common with *Agni*? So far as *Agni* is concerned, he can adorn the divine laws on account of himself being one of the divinities. But, being a human being, how can *Aṅgiras* do the same so as to have led *Agni* to be called *Aṅgiras*? A kind of solution to this problem can be seen in the preceding mantras of the hymn where *Hiraṇyastūpa* describes *Agni* as the first *Aṅgiras* seer and as such to have

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1 यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि।
तवेत्तत् सत्यमङ्गिरः।। *RV.I.1.6*

2 त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरस्तमः कविर्देवानां परिभूषसि व्रतम्। *Ibid.,I.31.2*

become friendly with gods, particularly as he himself was a god.[3] If *Agni* was friendly to gods by virtue of being himself a god, *Aṅgiras* became so on account of having attained to seerhood. When some sort of identity like this gets visualised between the seer and the god, the seer becomes liable to be referred to as a god and inversely the god becomes liable to be referred to as a seer. Moreover, the equation between the two, otherwise entirely different orders of beings, does not remain confined to the denominational level. Over and above that, once established, it begins to operate as an actuality making seers be treated as gods and gods be treated as seers. If *Āmbhṛṇī*, the celebrated daughter of seer *Ambhṛṇa*, could claim to move in the company of *Rudras, Vasus* and *Ādityas* and to have created the Father of the creation himself simply on account of having realised her essential oneness with the Divine, it is just the inverse part of the same experience that makes a particular divine being be addressed as a human seer.

But the peculiar thing with *Aṅgiras* is that he in particular is associated with *Agni* and consequently the latter has come to be addressed after the seer's name rather most frequently. This has been done not only by seers belonging to the lineage of *Angiras* such as *Hiraṇyastūpa*, but also by those of other lineages such as *Parucchepa* belonging to the lineage of *Divodasa*. He, for instance, observes that he along with other sacrificers has invoked *Agni*, the eldest of the *Aṅgirasas* and the inspired seer besides. An additional clue to the address of *Agni* as *Aṅgiras*, and at that the eldest one, can be had in the last part of this hemistich of the mantra in which the mantras have been given the adjective *Vipra*, the inspired seer.[4] Obviously addressing mantras as *vipras* is due to the former having been seen by the latter in the state of inspiration which depended on the establishment of closest intimacy of the seer with the object of his seeing.

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between the earthly human and the heavenly Divine. But, contrary to it, what actually is true is that the human has always been seeing his fulfilment in praying to and contemplating on the Divine resulting, as if, in his drawing close to Him at least after death, to prove the verity of which, however, there is no tangible evidence. But, in the Vedic tradition, there are numerous references and accounts bearing out intimate relationship between the human and the Divine going to the extent of the human becoming the Divine and the latter playing the role of the former. Besides the case of *Āmbhṛṇī* referred to already, we have those of *Vasistha* sitting in the same boat as *Varuṇa* and enjoying swinging on the waves of the sea,[5] of *Virūpa Angirasa* praying to *Agni* either to take him up into itself or itself assume the form of him,[6] and of *Viśvāmitra* claiming to be *Agni* itself, being all-knowing inherently from his birth and having *ghṛta* as his eyes and the drink of immortality in his mouth besides being the measurer of space, the unaging special vessel of milk as also the oblation.[7]

The seer's experience of his identity with the Divine as well as that of the latter's oneness with the seer, has a psychology of its own lacking in the cognisance of which scholars have advanced a plethora of views giving rise to various sorts of misunderstanding regarding the actual state of things. Animatism, Animism, Fetishism and Personification are some of the more important words coined or used in this connection to describe this peculiar situation. The upholders of Animatism are of view that the intimacy between the human and the Divine is due to attribution of some sort of consciousness in some of the more impressive objects in Nature such as the sun, the moon, the dawn, the fire, etc. By virtue of being supposed to share consciousness with man, they maintain, these natural objects are taken to be close to human beings and as responsive to the latter's prayers, persuasions and projections of relationships with the possibility of culminating even in interchangeability and identification. The propounders of Animism go a step further in explaining the phenomenon in terms of attribution of some sort of spirit happening to embody itself for the time being in these spectacles of Nature and thus opening the way to the supposition of man's relationship with them

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There is no doubt about it that the human mind has worked differently as well as similarly in course of the long history of its life on this planet in keeping with the variety of the situations faced as also its own state of development and equipment. As such, it is quite possible that each one of these explanations fits in well with the situation at least under which it emerged and from which it drew the data necessary for its formulation. But to assert anyone of them in place of all of them taking it as the sole explanation of the entire phenomenon in all its perspectives is to side-track the issue really involved. It concerns not any particular belief cherished anywhere in any section of the society but the basic nature of consciousness and the mode of its working particularly in situations involving the sense of identity between the source and the object of the consciousness, that is, the subject and the object. The subject and the object obviously are entirely different from each other in the same way as are the eater and the edible. Against this solid background the possibility of oneness between the subject and the object is something astounding. Had it been casual, it could possibly be explained as something abnormal taking place as an aberration of mind. But when it occurs as something recurrent over as vast a period as the composition of the mantras on the one side and at least the discourses of the *Upaniṣads* on the other involving hundreds of seers and sages spread over at least a million square kilometres, as the Vedic geography was, it calls for an explanation comprehensive and plausible enough to do justice to it.

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Cognisance of the inner observer and that also as a form of fire, opens the way to one's identification of oneself with *Agni*. And this by no means is peculiar to *Viśvāmitra*. Instances of it can be adduced from very many other seers also. This being a matter of inner experience of seers, to trace any developmental process behind this idea is superfluous. This is obvious from its presence in its entire implication in seer *Aṅgiras* himself. In spite of having been the earliest Vedic seer extant, he evinces his full

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sense of identity with *Agni*. And this, therefore, is not to be taken as symptomatic of Animism, Animatism, Fetishism or Personification but as a sure indication of the seer's understanding of *Agni* from within himself as the basic principle of creation and hence as operative on all planes as well as scales of being including both the individual and the universal.

It is in this light that we can understand properly the significance of such prayers of the seer as that in which *Virūpa Angirasa* observes as follows:

"O Agni, the best of the Angirasas and whom people kindle like Manu, you, as such, take cognisance of my prayer."[9]

Addressing *Agni* as the best of the *Angirasas* by one of the descendants or pupils of *Angiras* himself testifies to *Angiras'* experience of his oneness with *Agni*. So is the indication given by another mantra of the same seer in which the latter addresses *Agni* again as the best of the *Angirasas* and asks the former to relish the offerings and take the sacrifice to the Divine punctually.[10]

It is significant to note that the use of the adjective *Angiras* for *Agni* is not confined to any one seer or family of seers such as that of seer *Angiras* himself possibly out of great regard for the progenitor. Against this, the fact really is that *Agni* is addressed to as *Angiras* by so many seers, all of whom cannot be taken to have belonged to the family of *Angiras*. For instance, seer *Vāmadeva* in one of his mantras prays to *Agni* as *Angiras* expecting the deity to listen to his prayer and rejoice in his sacrifice.[11]

That the reason behind *Agni's* denomination as *Angiras* was the exemplary *tapas* of the seer of this name in particular is evident from a Yajurvedic mantra in which *Agni* has been prayed to exercise his *tapas* which has been derived from *Bhṛgus* and *Angirasas*.[12] The burden of this prayer is just the inverse of the situation under which the particular *sādhanā* undergone by seers has been given the symbol of *tapas*. While

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9 यं त्वा जनास इन्धते मनुष्वदङ्गिरस्तम।
अग्ने स बोधि मे वचः।। *Ibid., VIII.43.27*

10 जुषाणो अङ्गिरस्तमेमा हव्यान्यानुषक्।
अग्ने यज्ञं नय ऋतुथा।। *Ibid., VIII.44.8*

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अस्माकं शृणुधी हवम्।। *Ibid., IV.9.7*

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the symbol of *tapas* has behind its formation *Agni's* function of heating, in this case *tapas* of the seers themselves is supposed to be in a position to confer on *Agni* the capability of heating. When a seer may impart heating power to *Agni* by means of his *tapas*, there is no difficulty at all in his giving his denomination also to the god. Thus, if the spiritual heat generated by the *tapas* of the seer can be supposed to create physical heat, the Divine can easily be conceived to play the role of the human, as is suggested by the denomination of *Agni* as *Angiras*. In this way, while the spiritual *sādhanā* of the seer comes to derive the symbol of *tapas* from the heat of *Agni*, the latter on account of coincidence of its heat with the spiritual power of the seer, comes in a position to be denoted symbolically by the name of the seer.

Sāyaṇa has tried to explain it in terms of causal relationship between *Agni* and seer *Aṅgiras*. While commenting on a mantra seen by *Gaya Ātreya* and referring to *Agni* as *Aṅgiras*, he observes that *Agni* is called *Aṅgiras* here on account of non-distinction between the cause and the effect as it prevails between the god and the seer.[13] There is no doubt about it that the relationship of cause and effect is also a source of symbolism. In these cases, the cause is symbolised by the effect on account of relatively easier access to the latter. Being subtle and invisible, the Divine needs to be indicated to through something which is concrete and visible. From that viewpoint, fire itself is just a symbol of god *Agni*. This symbolical relationship, however, is so closely realistic that one finds it difficult to make a distinction between the real and the symbolical in such cases. That does not remain so when a human being is used to symbolise *Agni* by virtue of being akin to the god in respect to his *tapas* having a tinge of heat involved in it, though only analogically. As such, it is hard to define this relationship as causal, since it too falls in the category of the analogical.

Another explanation that *Sāyaṇa* offers for *Agni's* denomination as *Aṅgiras* is based on derivation of the latter from the root *ang*, to move. As such, *Aṅgiras* is one which is mobile. By virtue of serving as the messenger between gods and human beings, *Agni* can very well be taken as highly mobile. But while seeing mobility as the reason behind the denomination of *Agni* as *Aṅgiras*, it will have to be proved that seer *Aṅgiras* himself was anyway noted for his mobility over and above other seers. Since there is no such evidence available in all probability, this

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sense of identity with *Agni*. And this, therefore, is not to be taken as symptomatic of Animism, Animatism, Fetishism or Personification but as a sure indication of the seer's understanding of *Agni* from within himself as the basic principle of creation and hence as operative on all planes as well as scales of being including both the individual and the universal.

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explanation cannot be accorded any plausibility. The same can be said of his explanation of goddess *Uṣas* having been addressed as *Angiras tama* by *Vasistha*. In the mantra concerned, *Uṣas* is noted not for her movement but for her capacity to remove the hostile darkness.[14] That *Sāyaṇa* himself is not fully satisfied with this explanation given by him is clear from his comment on another mantra addressed to *Uṣas* where she is called *Angirastama* as well as *Indratama*. In this mantra besides associating the adjective with mobility, he as an alternative, suggests that *Uṣas* is called *Angirastama* on account of night having been born along with *Bharadvājas* who are descendants of *Angiras* while dawn is the last part of the night.[15] Obviously this is no explanation at all, on account of involving several weak points, such as birth of night with *Bharadvājas*, and *Uṣas* being called *Aṅgirastama* on account of forming the last part of night. All these presuppositions are brought in simply to explain why *Uṣas* is called *Angirastama*, which they are incapable of explaining.

Sāyaṇa's shakiness in this regard gets further betrayed through his comment on a mantra seen by *Vāmadeva*. Here he observes that it is the seed of *Agni* which getting lustrous gave birth to *Aditya* while the burning coal of it that is the *angaras* assumed the form of *Aṅgirasas*.[16] Obviously the great commentator would not have been required to go through all these beatings about the bush, had he simply cognised the symbolism underlying the equation of *Agni* as well as *Uṣas* with *Aṅgiras*. The symbolism lies in the equivalence of the physical heat to the spiritual fervour generated by *tapas*. *Aṅgiras* indeed was such a great *tapasvin* that even *Agni* with all his heat and *Uṣas* with all her power of illumination happened to be named after him.

Baselessness of the explanations offered by *Sāyaṇa* in this regard is also evident from an instance where even *Soma* has been addressed as the best of the *Angirasas*. In the mantra concerned, *Soma*, while undergoing the process of purification, has been characterised as *Vipra*, the inspired

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14 व्युषा आवो दिविजा ऋतेनाविष्कृण्वाना महिमानमागात्।
अप दुहस्तमा आवरजुष्टमङ्गिरस्तमा पथ्या अजीगः।। *RV. VII75.1*

15 अङ्गिरस्तमा गन्तृतमा। यद्वा अङ्गिरोगोत्रैः भरद्वाजैः सह रात्रेरप्युत्पत्तेः।
रात्र्यवसानस्योषारूपत्वादङ्गिरस्तमा इत्युच्यते भारद्वाजैः। *Sāyaṇa on RV. VII.79.3*

16 अङ्गिरसामादित्यपुत्रत्वमेवमाम्नायते तस्य यदेतसः प्रथममदीप्यत तदसावादित्यो ऽ
भवदित्युपक्रम्य ये अङ्गारा आसंस्ते अङ्गिरसोऽभवन्। *Ibid., RV.IV.2.15*

seer, particularly the best of the *Angirasas.*[17] Obviously *Soma* has nothing to do either with the burning coal, *angara*, or with any specific movement. Calling it as *Aṅgirastama*, therefore, must have some reason other than these behind it. An idea of that reason may be had from the adjectives *jagrvih*, keeping awake, and *vipra*, inspired seer, used for *Soma* in this mantra. Understandably it is owing to the features of *Soma* implicit in these two adjectives that it is called *Aṅgirastama* here. Both these features obviously are associated with the seer and his *sādhanā* involving constant vigilance in consciousness. Since *Aṅgiras* has been regarded as exemplary in this regard, it was but in the fitness of things that god *Soma* got transferred to him the seer's name in the superlative while being conceived as a seer passing through the process of purification. The seer's process of self-purification can best be symbolised by *Soma* passing through the process of purification. If *Soma* gets purified by passing through sieves, the seer's *sādhanā* of self-purification involves purgation of his consciousness.

If purification is the basis of *Soma* being called *Angiras*, *tapas* forms the basis of *Agni's* denomination as the same. *Agni* as discovered by *Angiras* is by no means the physical fire. The latter must have been discovered by man much before any *Angiras* might have been born, if not by rubbing two sticks, at least by striking a piece of stone against the other, as it is a relatively easier way to produce fire. Production of fire by rubbing two pieces of *Śamī*wood, on the other hand, would have been started much later under the framework of the vision of the Vedic seers seeing the existence of fire even in vegetations. When these seers headed particularly by *Angiras* would through their *tapas* have got revealed from within themselves the fire of consciousness, they in order to symbolise this momentous achievement of theirs would have taken up to produce fire by rubbing the sticks of *Śamī*wood and thus would have started making use of fire thus produced in the context of sacrifice which in itself, as we have already seen, is a highly symbolic act. It is *Agni* symbolised particularly by fire produced by rubbing the sticks which is the real object of the discovery attributed to *Aṅgiras*. It is indeed this *Agni* which is said to have been found out by seers under the leadership of *Aṅgiras* from its concealment in the cave as also from forests. Since its revelation involved

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17 पुनानः सोम जागृविरव्यो वारे परि प्रियः।
त्वं विप्रो अभवोऽङ्गिरस्तमो मध्वो यज्ञं मिमिक्ष नः।। *Ibid.,IX,107.6*

on the part of seers exercise of stupendous power, *Agni* is called the son of power. Further on, since this *Agni* was thus discovered initially by *Aṅgiras*, it has been named after him.[18] If seer *Bhṛgu* made it luminous, and *Manu* facilitated its sacrificial use, *Angiras* by means of his *tapas* made the discovery of it.[19] Thus while *Soma* is called *Aṅgiras* owing to its process of purification, *Agni* is called so on account of the *tapas* the seer had to undergo in the discovery of this fire. If purification of *Soma* is symbolic of the seer's act of self-purification, *Agni's* heat is symbolic of the *tapas* of the seer used in the procurement of that *Agni*.

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18 त्वामग्ने अङ्गिरसो गुहाहितमन्वविन्दञ् छिश्रियाणं वने वने।
स जायसे मथ्यमानः सहोमहत् त्वामाहुः सहसस्पुत्रमङ्गिरः॥ *Ibid., V.11.6*

19 उत त्वा भृगुवर्च्छुचे मनुष्वदग्न आहुत।
अङ्गिरस्वद्ध्रवामहे॥ *Ibid., VIII.43.13*

Besides having given his name to several gods and goddesses such as *Agni, Soma, Indra, Bṛhaspati* and *Aśvins*, seer *Aṅgiras* is said to have physically collaborated with a number of them in a particular task namely rescuing of cows from the hold of certain agencies such as *Paṇi, Vṛtra*, etc. For instance, in a mantra seer *Nodhā Gautama* asks his followers to offer such a profound prayer to mighty *Indra* by means of which our primeval Fathers, namely the *Aṅgirasas*, making application of prayers with the awareness of the proper location, found out the cows.[1] In this mantra, obviously, the *Aṅgirasas* are said to have found out the cows themselves with no doubt the grace of *Indra* whom they prayed to. Besides the grace, what seems to have been instrumental in this discovery is their knowledge of the location or the path leading to the place of hiding of the cows. On the basis of this account, it can very well be presumed that the *Āṅgirasas* were persons whose cows were stolen by someone and they somehow got trace of the cows and hence could get restored to them with the grace of *Indra.* But the problem becomes complicated in view of the details revealed in the immediately following mantras. In the first one of these, it has been stated that on *Indra* and the *Āṅgirasas* wishing for the cows, *Sarama* obtained them as the means of sustenance for her progeny. It is a matter of common knowledge that *Sarama* is the bitch of *Indra.* As such, getting the cows restored to them by the *Āṅgirasas* just for the sake of serving as the means of sustenance of the progeny of *Sarama* looks funny. This also, however, may be allowed for the time being in view of the involvement of *Indra* in the restoration of the cows, even though only notionally. But the real problem crops up in the second hemistich of the mantra where it has been stated that it is really *Bṛhaspati* who rent the mountain and found out the cows while the associates of *Āngirasas* shouted with the sense of victory.[2] There would not have arisen any problem, had *Āngirasas* themselves or with the help of their associates put asunder the mountains and found out the cows, no matter with the grace of *Bṛhaspati* also as they were free to seek the notional help of him

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1 प्र वो॑ म॒हे म॒हि नमो॑ भरध्वमाङ्गू॒ष्यं॑ शव॒साना॑य सा॒मन॑।
येना॑ नः॒ पूर्वे॑ पि॒तरः॑ पद॒ज्ञा अर्च॑न्तो अङ्गिरसो॒ गा अवि॑न्दन्। । *RV.I.62.2*

2 इन्द्र॒स्याङ्गि॑रसां चे॒ष्टौ वि॒दत् स॒रमा॒ तन॑याय धा॒सिम्।
बृह॒स्पति॑र्भि॒नदद्रिं॑ विद॒द् गाः समु॒स्रिया॑भि॒ वाव॑सन्त॒ नरः॑। । *Ibid.,I.62.3*

as well as of *Indra*. But here *Bṛhaspati* himself is said to have rent the mountain for the sake of the *Āngirasas* who having already in the second mantra being stated to have recovered the cows themselves physically. The point of the presence of the seers at the sight of the rending of the mountain becomes still clearer from the next mantra in the hymn bearing out the involvement of *Indra* instead of *Bṛhaspati* in the act of rending. According to this mantra, when *Indra* rent the mountain by means of sound and thus eliminated *Vala*, the persons present at the sight were seven seers including those who were ordinary reciters of mantras, special reciters of mantras, as well as *Navagvas* and *Daśagvas*. He, too, is said to have accomplished the task by means of sound.[3] The seers, as reciters of mantras, are obviously collaborators in the task of rending.

Thus, here is an incident where *Āṅgirasas* look very well to have worked shoulder to shoulder with gods such as *Indra* and *Bṛhaspati* as also with *Saramā*, the divine bitch. How could it be possible for the Divine and the human to have co-operated with each other physically in the recovery of the cows concerned? Moreover, if the thieves of the cows were any human beings, no matter of whatever denomination, they could at that stage of cultural and technological development keep the cows hidden in a certain secret cavern of the mountain cleaved already naturally. Thinking of putting the cows inside the mountain so as to require rending of the mountain, as the account obviously gives us to understand, is something beyond all limits of feasibility. Those people could, at the most, only get the cows recovered from the cavern they might have been kept concealed in and could by no means rend the mountain itself so as to recover the cows. If, on the other hand, rending was done by the gods *Bṛhaspati* and *Indra*, in what form could it possibly be done so as to create the impression that it was accomplished under the effect of the prayers of the seers concerned? If the rending were sought to be understood in terms of gradual erosion of the mountain, the release of cows from the clutches of the thief would not remain realistic.

This suspicion gains greater ground when we take into consideration the next mantra in the hymn. Here it has been observed that in response to the prayer of the *Āṅgirasas*, *Indra* removed the darkness by means of the dawn, the sun and the cows as also did he expand the peak of the

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3 स सुष्टुभा स स्तुभा सप्त विप्रैः स्वरेणादिं स्वर्यो३ नवग्वैः।
सरण्युभिः फलिगमिन्द श्क वलं रवेण दरयो दशग्वैः।। *Ibid.,I.62.4*

mountain and stabilise the higher region of the heaven.[4] Here obviously the entire scenario undergoes a radical change excepting the prayer of the *Āṅgirasas* and the deity whom it is addressed to. No more does the cow remain here the object of recovery. It, instead of this, comes to serve as a means applied by the deity in dispelling the darkness. Involvement of the dawn and the sun in this task is, no doubt, understandable. But, bracketing the cows with them, as has been done in the mantra, is evidently something beyond comprehension. Here, instead of restoration of cows, *Indra's* action undertaken in response to the prayer of the *Āṅgirasas*, gets directed to removal of darkness with the consequence of elevation of the peak of the earth and stabilisation of the higher region of the heaven. This variation in the effect of *Indra's* action undertaken in response to the prayer of the same seers veritably suggests at least that the account of restoration of the cows from the cavern of the mountain is not to be taken literally at all. In that case, removal of darkness at the dawn of *Uṣas* and rise of the sun would also have an equal possibility of being the real burden of the account embedded in these mantras.

That the motif of cow has nothing to do at all in any literal sense in this legend is evident from a mantra seen by another seer, namely, *Parāśara* and having a reference to *Āṅgirasas*. In this mantra the *Āṅgirasas* themselves are said to have rent the mountain notwithstanding its solidity and hardness. The instrument used in the act of rending here also is sound. The result of the act, however, is not restoration of any cow but preparation of the path leading to the widely expanded heaven for the seer and others of his like along with the knowledge of the dawns, the day and the heavenly light.[5] In this account, obviously the motif of restoration of cows has been substituted by the preparation of the path leading to the expanded heaven. If cows were made to escape the cramped cavern in the mantras seen by *Nodhā Gautama as* discussed earlier, the accessibility to the broad heaven has been facilitated in this mantra as seen by *Parāśara*. The sameness of the tool, *i.e.*, the sound of the prayer of the *Āṅgirasas*, used in both the cases suggests the possibility of equation between the motifs of them, that is restoration of cows and facilitation of access to the heaven.

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4 गृणानो अङ्गिरोभि र्दस्म विवरुषसा सूर्येण गोभिरन्धः।
वि भूर्या अप्रथय इन्द्र सानु दिवो रज उपरमस्तभायः।। *Ibid.,I.62.5*

5 वीळु चिद् दृळ्हा पितरो न उक्थैरद्रिं रुजन्नङ्गिरसो रवेण।
च कुर्दिवो बृहतो गातुमस्मे अहः स्वर्विविदुः केतुमुस्राः।। *Ibid.,I.71.2*

With the emergence of the possibility of equation between the two motifs, the question arises as to the feasibility of either of the two having been intended by the seers to serve as the main theme of the account. This has got to be determined by taking stock of other references relevant to the theme. One such reference is the mantra quoted at *footnote No.4* above. Here, what is the outcome of the prayer of the *Āṅgirasas* is emergence of the dawn, rising of the sun, elimination of darkness, expansion of the peak of the earth and stabilisation of the higher region of the heaven. Needless to point out that all these spectacles are by far much more relevant to the path to the Divine rather than to any restoration or discovery of cows, unless, of the course, the latter is taken in any symbolic sense.

That allusion to cow in the legend is not anything of primary importance, is evident from a mantra seen by another seer, namely, *Parucchepa*. The mantra concerned is addressed to *Indra* as its deity who significantly enough has been referred to as the best of the *Āṅgirasas*. While praying to *Indra* the seer observes that the former has found out the treasure of the heaven like the embryo of the bird enclosed within unending thickness of rock or alternatively as the stall of cows kept closed.[6] What is significant to note in this mantra is that the cow has been referred to here as a simile to the basic motif which is discovery of the treasure of the heaven by *Indra*. Another simile adduced for that motif is the embryo of the bird lying concealed in the egg, which has been conceived here as made of stone of unending thickness. The shell of the bird's egg, no doubt, is very thin. Even then, however, the motherly bird cannot break it unless and until it has got matured. For its maturation, the bird is required to sit and brood over it. Without such brooding the egg would turn empty of the young one and hence a mass of dead stuff as inconsequential as an unending mass of stone. In this capacity, it would be comparable to the mountainous enclosure of cows. Just as the bird gets its young one out of the egg by brooding over it and piercing through its shell, even so *Indra* rescues the cows from within the infinitely thick enclosure of stone. Both these images, however, have been introduced here to give an idea of the difficulty undergoing which *Indra* has been able to get access to the treasure of the heaven. Thus the case of the recovery of cows as well as of

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6 अविन्दद् दिवो निहितं गुहा निधिं वेर्न गर्भं परिवीतमश्मन्यन्तन्ते अन्तरश्मनि।
व्रजं वज्री गवामिव सिषासन्नङ्गिरस्तमः।
अपावृणोदिष इन्द्रः परीवृता द्वार इषः परीवृताः।। *Ibid.,I.130.3*

getting the young one of the bird out of the shell by the latter has been introduced just to give an idea of the difficulty involved in the act and by no means to serve as the basic theme of the account. This is evident beyond doubt from the use of the word *iva* as indicative of the sense of comparison equally with cows and the bird. This in itself is sufficient to dispel all misunderstanding about its real status.

Reference to *Indra* as the best of the *Āṅgirasas* in this context must have a significant bearing on this account. It obviously is meant to indicate that the task of getting the heavenly wealth was accomplished by *Angiras* himself having evolved the spirit of *Indra* from within him. When *Indra* could be supposed to have assumed all forms in the world so as to visualise himself in a better perspective, as has been observed by *Garga Bharadvāja* in the well-known mantra,[7] we cannot resist the conclusion that he can very well be conceived as having become the primeval *Angiras* just for the sake of getting the best possible view of his original being. On this assumption, *Indra* himself can be supposed to have assumed the form of the best of the *Āṅgirasas*, that is, the primeval *Aṅgiras*. In that case, acquisition of the heavenly treasure by *Indra* would naturally boil down to the psychic level of Angiras' achievement in spirituality as the primeval seer. In view of preciousness of the attainment as well as the difficulties involved in getting to it, it would be easy to see the relevance of the similes of the cow and the bird used to give us an idea of the whole affair in its real spiritual perspective.

That the treasure of the heaven described as cows recovered from the mountains was neither any material treasure nor a herd of cows but the way to *Ṛta* is evident from a group of three mantras seen by *Viśvāmitra*. According to the first one of these mantras, though the confinements were strong, the seven wise seers pierced through them by means of their highly activated mind. Thus, it is stated, they found the path leading to *Ṛta*. These seers are the *Āṅgirasas* themselves.[8] As such, the legend of cows discovered by *Indra* and other gods in association with the *Āṅgirasas* comes to have as its theme not recovery of any cows but the way to the

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7 रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव तदस्य रूपं प्रतिचक्षणाय।
इन्द्रो मायाभिःपुरुरूप ईयते युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयः शता दश। । *Ibid., VI.47.18*

8 वीळौ सतीरभि धीरा अतृन्दन् प्राचाहिन्वन् मनसा सप्त विप्राः।
विश्वामविन्दन् पथ्यामृतस्य प्रजानन्नित्ता नमसा विवेश। । *Ibid., III.31.5*

principle of *Ṛta*. Notwithstanding this being the real subject matter of the legend, the next mantra talks of the same incident by associating it with *Sarama*, the bitch of *Indra*. According to it, *Sarama's* finding out the opening in the mountain was equivalent to have broadened the primeval path so that others also might traverse it subsequently. Through this venturesome accomplishment of hers, the mantra observes, she brought to the fore the foremost of the syllables by moving towards the sound with all her sure-footedness combined with necessary awareness of the terrain.[9] The path of *Ṛta* is obviously the path leading to *Ṛta*, the dynamics of the universal creation. Characterisation of this path as primeval bears out the seer's awareness of the parallelism between the ontological and the epistemic. This is also very much implied in *Ṛta* operating on both these grounds. Thus if *Ṛta* is primeval in its operation in the reality, it is also primeval in generating the awareness of that reality. It is only when the seven seers had moved forward along that path that it came to be understood by them that all this was accomplished in full cognisance amounting to actual presence of *Indra*.

How *Indra* operated in this connection has been recounted in the next mantra of the hymn. Here it has been pointed out that he involved *Sarama*, his bitch, to trace the fissure in the mountain leading to the point where the cows might have been kept hidden. With her sure-footedness as well as super sense of smell, she is able to accomplish this task and prepare the background for the entry of *Indra* there and enable the seers to find out the path leading to *Ṛta* and get the cows restored to them. This whole enterprise was undertaken by the seven seers under the leadership of *Aṅgiras*. Thus, it is obvious that the task, as a matter of fact, was accomplished by the seers themselves and that therefore *Indra's* involvement in it, along with his bitch *Saramā's*, was only notional from the rational viewpoint and spiritual from the viewpoint of the seers themselves.

Another feature of the venture emerging out of the accounts embedded in this mantra is the role of *Saramā* in bringing to fore the foremost of the syllables, *akṣaras*. From *Dīrghatamas'* use of the phrase *sahasrākṣara parame vyoman* for *Vāk* conceived as a cow, as discussed earlier, it is evident that the word *akṣara* as used here in the mantra under consideration must have to do with the phenomenon of *Vāk* itself

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9 वि॒दद् यदी॑ स॒रमा॑ रु॒ग्णम॒दे॒र्महि॒ पाथः॑ पू॒र्व्यं स॒ध्र्य॑क्कः ।
अग्रं॑ नयत् सु॒पद्यक्ष॑राणा॒मच्छा॒ रवं॑ प्रथ॒मा जा॑न॒ती गा॑त् ।। *Ibid.,III.31.6*

particularly as concerned with the syllable, the ultimate building block of it. This interpretation finds confirmation from the use of the word *rava*, sound, here which *Saramā* is said to have recognised before finding out the way to the cows. Bringing to the fore the foremost of the syllables by her, therefore, is sure to refer to the syllable or word *Om* which, as we have already seen, was the basic thing discovered by *Angiras*, his son *Ayāsya* and his companions. Understandably it is this group of seers which has been referred to in this mantra as that of seven seers, *sapta viprah*.

That the foremost of syllables, as referred to in this mantra and said to have been taken note of by *Saramā* in course of her search for the cows has basically to do with the most primeval of the words, can also be inferred from the famous hymn to *Jñāna* as seen by *Bṛhaspati* of the same family of *Angiras* . This hymn opens with an account of the first and foremost part of *Vāk* moving ahead along the path of denomination and being found out by means of determination for it from a place of hiding.[10] In the third mantra of the hymn, it has been pointed out that people reached the abode of *Vāk* through sacrifice and found it out as having made entry into seers.[11] This description obviously amounts to the discovery of the source of *Vāk* by seers within themselves and to made it available for application in sacrificial performances subsequently. In the fifth mantra, again, *Vāk*, as such, has been alluded to as a cow yielding abundant milk to one who takes due care of her but behaving like a phantom of cow towards one who does not do so.[12] This mantra makes it abundantly evident that the *Āṅgirasas* were prone to use the imagery of cow to refer to the phenomenon of *Vāk* in regard to the understanding of the sense intended to be communicated through it while the first and the third mantras of the hymn bear out how these very seers in particular were involved in the discovery of *Vāk* along with its source and as a result found it out within themselves by going to such a depth of their psyche as necessitating them to bring in the image of cave and recovery of cows from it to give an idea of the adventure involved in their discovery. An idea of the depth of the psyche forming the source of *Vāk* can be had from the observation of *Vāgāmbhṛṇī,* as discussed earlier that her source lies in

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10 बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं यत् प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः।
यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत् प्रेणा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः।। *Ibid.,X.71.1*

11 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टाम्। *Ibid.,X.71.3*

12 उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहु र्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु।
अधेन्वा चरति मायया एष वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम्।। *Ibid.,X.71.5*

the depth of the sea.[13] In view of this kind of its depth, therefore, it is nothing surprising if the *Vāk* enshrining the Vedic wisdom in it be in its plural form conceived as a number of cows kept concealed by a certain hostile agency in a cave deep in the midst of mountains. The psychic mountain would obviously be the mountain of ignorance having enclosed within it the Vedic wisdom in the form of higher consciousness as manifesting itself in the state of higher thinking, meditation and *samadhi* as well as in certain states of intuition and dream.

That seer *Aṅgiras* was very much involved in some such *sādhanā* relating to *Vāk* and that he became so eminent on account of that *sādhanā* is evident from the seventh mantra of the hymn of *Viśvāmitra* as referred to above. In this mantra it has been observed that *Indra*, as the best of the *Vipras*, developed friendship with the mountain to the effect that the latter unveiled its treasure to him which eventually went to a mortal waging war in the company of young people and that it is as a result of this that *Aṅgiras* has come to gain his eminence.[14] While *Indra* is the divine help supposed to be made available to him at crucial points in his *sādhanā*, the young people accompanying him in this venture are the seven *Vipras* helping him in the recovery of the cows of wisdom lying concealed in the mountain of ignorance.

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13 मम् योनिरप्स्वा॑न्तः स॑मु॒दे। *Ibid.,X.125.7*

14 अग॑च्छदु विप्र॑तमः सरवीयन्नसू॑दयत् सुकृ॒ते गर्भ॒मद॑ः।
स॒सान॒ मर्यो॑ युवभिर्मर॒वस्यन्नथा॑भव॒दङ्गि॑राः स॒द्यो अर्च॑न्। । *Ibid.,III.31.7*

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